



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



FRIDAY — 8 JAN 2021

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	01/07 WSP bolstering security state Capitol
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/wsp-bolstering-security-state-capitol-after-breach-ahead-more-protests/PGBV4SYNTRHFLCYIKEI75TJMMY/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — Protesters stormed and breached a gate outside the governor’s mansion at the Olympia state Capitol on Wednesday. Washington State Patrol admits it was ultimately caught unprepared — and said it has made immediate changes in security response.</p> <p>There was a much larger presence of state troopers on the Capitol campus on Thursday. The gate itself to the property of the governor’s mansion is also being evaluated and will be improved “as necessary.”</p> <p>“The response could’ve been better. We know we can improve, and we’re always looking for ways to improve,” said Sgt. Darren Wright, with the Washington State Patrol (WSP).</p> <p>He said protesters frequently march to the gates to protest, but there has never been a mass breach like what happened Wednesday.</p> <p>Demonstrators had been peaceful all day. But once they reached the gates, someone with a megaphone started shouting, “We’re here to take the stand; enough is enough!”</p> <p>The crowd chanted, “Open the gate! Open the gate!” Then protesters started shaking the gates. Suddenly, they breached the side gate door, and the crowd surged inside.</p> <p>“Yeah! We’re in boys!” a man shouted.</p> <p>Only one lone trooper was visible, who managed to pull a couple of people out of the gated property.</p> <p>“I got thrown by a cop!” another man in the crowd shouted.</p> <p>“Let’s go. They cannot arrest us all!” someone else shouted.</p> <p>The crowd swarmed the governor’s mansion but stayed on the lawn.</p> <p>“Our house! Our house!” the crowd chanted at one point.</p> <p>This breach has people in Olympia wondering if WSP was inadequately prepared.</p> <p>“After everything going on in D.C. all afternoon, I would’ve thought they would’ve been a little more prepared to expect something at the state Capitol in Washington state,” said Brenda Lehman, who is from the Olympia area.</p> <p>“No, we were not prepared for that particular incident. We had resources staged outside the area, which took a little while to get here. We had not had this occurrence before,” Wright said.</p> <p>Gov. Jay Inslee confirmed to reporters Thursday he was inside the mansion at the time and questioned the way the situation was handled.</p>

“This was a criminal activity by the insurrectionists. The reason why there were no arrests at that moment may be because the forces did not believe they had enough troops to carry out arrests,” Inslee said. “But I don’t know that yet,” Inslee said.

Wright said Washington State Patrol chose to not make arrests at the moment to prevent further escalation.

“Making arrests in that situation could lead to violence and lead to altercations, and we don’t want anyone getting hurt,” Wright said.

Troopers communicated with people in the crowd several times. And ultimately, the crowd did leave peacefully.

“That, for us, is a very big win. No one was hurt. There was no excessive property damage,” Wright said. He said WSP is still investigating charges for those who broke the fence and trespassed onto the property of the mansion.

The chaos both at the state Capitol and in Washington, D.C., has one protest organizer, Tyler Miller, canceling an event planned for next week in Olympia. He was expecting 500-1,000 people to show up.

“Considering the environment that it is, there was no way we could do this protest the way we want it and to achieve the goals that we want without it being hijacked and subverted by a few bad actors,” Miller said. “I’m very disappointed we’re not having the opportunity to do this protest,” he said.

Miller founded the group “Liberty, At All Hazards.”

He said the purpose of the now-canceled protest was to argue chamber doors should be open to the public when the Legislature is in session. It normally would be, but that policy was changed because of COVID-19 precautions. Now sessions are only broadcast on TV instead.

Miller said he’s been hearing of plans to cause trouble at the state Capitol from far-left groups and people who identify as patriots.

“They wanted to come and basically ramp things up. So getting it from both sides, the stated intent — in fact, they’re probably still going to show up,” Miller said.

“We’ve seen people who do just want to cause destruction and chaos,” Miller said. “I don’t want to feed and provide another form for that,” he said.

WSP said it is preparing for next week’s protests, and people will notice an increased law enforcement presence.

“We will be ready,” Wright said.

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HEADLINE	01/08 US ambassador to UN visits Taiwan
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-international-news-china-united-nations-taiwan-e6428c0a2a28c418f13144e1e5b3ecec
GIST	<p>TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Taiwan said Friday it welcomed the visit of the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations in the closing days of the Trump administration, in a move that brought China’s renewed condemnation of Washington.</p> <p>Kelly Craft will visit Taipei, the island’s capital, on Jan. 13-15, a week before the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden. The U.S. Mission to the United Nations said Thursday the visit would “reinforce the U.S. government’s strong and ongoing support for Taiwan’s international space.”</p>

A spokesperson for Taiwan's Presidential Office said Friday they "sincerely welcome" the visit and that final discussions about the trip were still underway.

The trip is a "symbol of the solid friendship between Taiwan and the U.S, and will positively help and deepen the U.S.-Taiwan partnership," the spokesperson said.

In announcing the trip on Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he was sending Craft to show "what a free China could achieve." Taiwan's official title is the Republic of China, the name of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party government that he moved to Taiwan in 1949 as Mao Zedong's Communists swept to power on mainland China.

China continues to regard Taiwan as part of its territory to be recovered by force if necessary.

The visit is yet another move from the Trump administration to step up interactions with the island despite their lacking formal diplomatic ties since Washington switched recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979. The U.S. outreach to Taiwan has exacerbated tensions between Washington and Beijing that are already running high over the COVID-19 pandemic, trade, Hong Kong and the South China Sea.

Craft was appointed by President Donald Trump to the position in 2019, and is due to be replaced by career diplomat Linda Thomas-Greenfield after Biden takes office.

In defiance of China's warnings, Congress and the Trump administration have pushed for more visits by sitting government officials, along with arms sales and political support. Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar visited in August, followed the next month by Under Secretary of State Keith Krach.

China stepped up its angry rhetoric and flew fighter jets near the island in a display of force during both visits.

Heightened tensions with China present a diplomatic challenge for Biden, who is expected to maintain many of Trump's policies toward Beijing while seeking to put relations on a more predictable, less confrontational track.

While Beijing has called for improved relations, it refuses to back down on issues such as Taiwan that it considers to be among its "core interests."

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying on Friday said a "handful of anti-China politicians within the Trump administration, to be clear, such as Pompeo, have been staging a show of madness as their days at the reins are numbered, stopping at nothing to deliberately sabotage China-U.S. relations for selfish political interests."

"China will take all necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty and security interests," Hua told reporters at a daily briefing. "If the U.S. insists on going its own way, it will definitely pay a heavy price for its erroneous actions."

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HEADLINE	01/08 Iran bans vaccines from US, Britain
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/us-news-iran-coronavirus-pandemic-ali-khamenei-183c3af4e30bea3c2c91d92701130752
GIST	TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei Friday banned Iran from importing of American Pfizer-BioNTech and Britain's Astrazeneca Covid-19 vaccines, a reflection of mistrust toward the West.

In a televised speech, he said the import of American and British vaccines were “forbidden,” referring to the surging death tolls from the virus in both countries.

“I really do not trust,” them, Khamenei said of those nations. “Sometimes they want to test” their vaccines on other countries, adding, “I am not optimistic (about) France,” either.

Iran has struggled to stem the worst virus outbreak in the Middle East.

Khamenei’s statement reflects decades of tense relations between Iran and the West which have not abated in the waning days of President Donald Trump’s presidency. Concerns ran especially high in the weeks leading up to the Jan. 3 one-year anniversary of the U.S. killing of a top Iranian general in Iraq.

A series of moves this week appeared aimed at increasing Iran’s leverage before Democrat Joseph Biden Jr. becomes president on Jan. 20.

On Monday, Iran began enriching uranium to levels unseen since its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. Under Trump, the U.S. in 2018 withdrew from the deal and re-imposed sanctions on Iran, sparking a series of escalating incidents.

Biden supported the deal with some reservations, and is expected to try to bring Iran back into compliance with it. He’s also expected to try to expand the pact to address non-nuclear issues.

During his 50-minute speech Friday, Khamenei addressed the transition of power in the U.S. by mocking American politics after a violent mob loyal to Trump overran the Capitol building in Washington.

“This is their democracy; this is their elections’ situation,” Khamenei said, smirking, during his address. He suggested the U.S. was being paid back for inciting tensions in Iran in 2009, after its election.

Khamenei also said the West should bring the end to “hostile and traitorous” sanctions against Iran and supported Iran’s regional influence and missile program.

Also on Friday, Iran’s state TV showed underground tunnels and depots of missiles in south of the country near strategic Strait of Hormuz. Iran has long insisted its nuclear program is peaceful.

On the virus, Iranian officials have said previously that importing the Pfizer vaccine, which must be shipped and stored at minus 70 degrees Celsius (minus 94 degrees Fahrenheit), poses major logistical challenges for Iran.

Iran has struggled to stem the worst virus outbreak in the Middle East, which has infected nearly 1.3 million people and killed nearly 56,000.

However, Khamenei Friday okayed the import of vaccines from other “safe” places, and remains supportive of Iran’s efforts toward producing a vaccine.

The country began testing its vaccines on humans December. The product is expected to hit the local market in spring.

Hardliners in Iran have longed opposed the U.S.-made vaccines. Iran’s Revolutionary Guard in December rejected the use of foreign-made vaccines altogether. Gen. Mohammad Reza Naghdi said the Guard “does not recommend the injection of any foreign vaccine” candidates based on genetic material known as messenger RNA, which carries the instructions for cells to make proteins.

Authorities said then that U.S.-based benefactors plan to deploy scores of thousands of Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus to Iran.

	Iran retains routes to vaccines despite sanctions, including through its participation in COVAX. International banks and financial institutions are reluctant to deal with Iran for fear of American penalties
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HEADLINE	01/07 National Guard 'unprecedented' 2020
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/07/us/national-guard-coronavirus-civil-unrest/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The US National Guard was so busy last year with "unprecedented" domestic deployments -- helping with Covid-19, civil unrest and natural disasters -- it referred to 2020 as Year of the Guard.</p> <p>So far, this year is no slouch, either.</p> <p>In the nation's capital, about 6,200 Guard members from six states and the District of Columbia are gathering to support law enforcement after rioters stormed the halls of Congress.</p> <p>In Wisconsin, the governor sent Guard members to Kenosha this week ahead of prosecutors' Tuesday announcement that police officers won't be charged in the Jacob Blake shooting.</p> <p>And across the country, National Guard members have been toiling in all kinds of roles to fight the coronavirus pandemic -- helping at testing sites, delivering protective equipment, sanitizing elderly care facilities and, more recently, helping to get vaccine shots into arms.</p> <p>Nearly 20,500 National Guard members were working across the country on Covid-19 relief efforts as of Thursday. They represent the majority of Guard members currently deployed domestically, the Guard says.</p> <p>With most holding civilian jobs until they're called up for overseas and homeland missions, Guard members are commonly activated stateside for natural disasters, as they were last year for wildfires and severe storms.</p> <p>But 2020 put more on their plates.</p> <p>At its busiest, the National Guard had more than 86,400 members serving stateside in early June, largely for Covid-19 or civil disturbances in the wake of George Floyd's death in Minneapolis, the Guard says. "Those are numbers that you just wouldn't think about as a Guardsman in these days and times," Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. John Sampa said last month.</p> <p>Some are inoculating people against Covid-19</p> <p>Guard members are increasingly helping with the country's Covid-19 vaccine rollout.</p> <p>In New Hampshire, they're helping put shots into people's arms.</p> <p>The state has set up 13 drive-through vaccination sites for qualified residents -- such as first responders -- at places like school parking lots and rented property, said Paul Raymond Jr., spokesman for the New Hampshire Joint Information Center.</p> <p>About 100 Guard members are split among the sites, making sure the vaccines get there, managing traffic and signing people in. And a few with health backgrounds -- medics and nurses -- administer the shots.</p> <p>It's been part of a whirlwind year for Maj. Lindsey Whelan, the New Hampshire Air National Guard's chief nurse, who was activated just a few weeks ago to oversee a site in Nashua that's receiving about 200 patients a day.</p>

Apart from the Guard, she's an intensive care nurse and trauma program manager at Manchester's Elliot Hospital. She left maternity leave in September to join her colleagues at the hospital in the thick of the pandemic.

She says it's encouraging to be on the vaccine side of things.

"I spent the better half of last year with colleagues, watching Covid patients come through and seeing how their family and friends are suffering. It's nice to be on the other side of this ... and prevent patients from getting it in the first place," Whelan told CNN Wednesday.

Maryland, too, is having its National Guard administer shots and give logistical support. This week it's sending teams to help local health departments with their clinics, according to Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan.

Some are training others to administer the shots

In Arizona, National Guard medics are training or retraining medical students and retired medical workers to give shots. The students and retirees had volunteered to help the state administer the Covid-19 vaccines.

Guard medics started training the volunteers on Monday. Two days later, some of the volunteers were already giving shots at a vaccination center in Maricopa County, according to the Arizona National Guard.

"This is a monumental call to service that requires a whole-of-community approach to accomplish," Maj. Gen. Michael T. McGuire, director of the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs, said of the volunteers.

Others are answering phone calls and helping with tests

In New York, Guard members are helping at 15 drive-through Covid-19 testing sites, putting together test kits. They are also screening passengers at 12 airports across the state, the Guard says.

It also created and ran field hospitals like the one at Manhattan's [Javits Convention Center](#), where the Guard says more than 1,000 coronavirus patients were treated.

New Mexico's National Guard says its members are helping store, transport and administer vaccine doses. In New Hampshire, besides the more than 100 members working at the vaccination sites, some 300 others are working on other virus-related tasks, including helping to operate a state call center, fielding questions like where to get tested or vaccinated.

Since April, it also has been operating a warehouse for personal protective equipment and distributing that equipment to hospitals, businesses, schools and polling sites across the state.

At the New Hampshire Guard's busiest moment last summer, more than 700 were activated for eight different efforts supporting the state against Covid-19, says Lt. Col. Greg Heilshorn.

The pandemic activations are "unprecedented" for the New Hampshire National Guard, both for the variety and duration of the missions, he says.

"We've never seen anything like this in our modern history for noncombat-related activation," Heilshorn said.

Some are helping to protect against civil unrest

Thousands of Guard members also have been called this week to guard against civil unrest, most of them in Washington DC.

Before Wednesday's storming of the Capitol, [a few hundred Guard members were activated](#). That's because officials knew demonstrators backing President Donald Trump were planning to congregate as Congress met to certify President-elect Joe Biden's election victory.

	<p>Initially, those few hundred Guard members were meant to focus mainly on crowd management and traffic control at Metro subway stations and a few dozen other locations, officials said.</p> <p>But after the riot at the Capitol, more were being called in -- from DC, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, Delaware and Pennsylvania -- bringing the total to about 6,200, a US defense official said Thursday.</p> <p>In Wisconsin, Gov. Tony Evers mobilized 500 Wisconsin National Guard troops this week, at the request of local officials, ahead of prosecutors' announcement in the Blake case.</p> <p>The Guard members were to "be on hand to support local first responders, ensure Kenoshans are able to assemble safely, and to protect critical infrastructure as necessary," Evers said Monday.</p> <p>In Georgia, Gov. Brian Kemp said Wednesday he'll extend an order, first issued in the summer, keeping the National Guard activated so that he can call on it to protect the state Capitol building and other state buildings if needed.</p> <p>Kemp put the Guard on alert in July after violent clashes between law enforcement and demonstrators in Atlanta during protests against police brutality.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Iran unveils underground missile base
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/08/middleeast/iran-underground-base-gulf-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Iran has unveiled an underground base for "strategic missiles" on its Gulf coastline, according to state media.</p> <p>Video broadcast by state media Friday showed the head of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards, Major General Hossein Salami, touring what appears to be a long underground tunnel lined with missiles and missile launchers.</p> <p>Iran's ballistic missiles arsenal is one of the flashpoints in Tehran's long-running disputes with its Arab neighbors and the United States. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab countries have called for the curbing of Iran's ballistic weapons, but Iran's leaders have repeatedly said the arsenal is not up for negotiation.</p> <p>When Tehran retaliated for the US's targeted killing of top general Qassem Soleimani in January 2020, it fired over a dozen ballistic missiles at US positions in Iraq.</p> <p>"What you see today is one of several IRGC Naval strategic missile facilities," Salami said according to the MEHR news agency.</p> <p>The base includes launching pads for long-range missiles that have a precision range of hundreds of kilometers, MEHR and IRNA said citing Salam.</p> <p>The unveiling of the base comes at a time of growing tensions between Iran and the US.</p> <p>On Monday, Tehran announced it had resumed enriching uranium to 20% purity, far beyond the limits laid out in the 2015 nuclear deal, which US President Donald Trump walked away from in 2018.</p> <p>US President-elect Joe Biden has pledged to reinstate the deal after he takes office on January 20. His national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, told CNN on Sunday that the incoming administration would also seek a "follow-on negotiation" over Iran's ballistic missile capabilities.</p>

Return to Top	<p>"Our view is that ballistic missiles, and Iran's ballistic missile program, has to be on the table as part of that follow-on negotiation," Sullivan said, adding the Biden administration would seek to bring some of Iran's regional partners to the table.</p> <p>Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Friday that his country was not in a rush to rejoin the nuclear deal and argued that the sanctions against Tehran must be lifted regardless of whether the US rejoins the pact.</p> <p>He also said he did not trust coronavirus vaccines produced by the Western countries, and called on officials to prohibit them from entering the country. "We must not import (Covid-19) vaccine from the US, the UK or even France. I do not trust them," Khamenei said in a speech to the nation televised on state media.</p> <p>The announcements around the missile base and uranium enrichment weren't the only Iranian provocations this week -- Tehran also seized a South Korean-flagged chemical tanker in the Persian Gulf on Monday.</p> <p>The US State Department condemned both the ship seizure and Iran's resumption of uranium enrichment. The US has flown B-52 bombers over the region, and on Sunday Trump ordered the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier, which was due to rotate home, to remain there.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Officials 'overpromised' in vaccine rollout
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/08/health/us-coronavirus-friday/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)In just less than two weeks, the US recorded its five deadliest days since the Covid-19 pandemic's start -- with more than 4,000 virus-related deaths reported Thursday.</p> <p>The nation's total Covid-19 death toll has now climbed to more than 365,300, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. And another nearly 115,000 people could lose their life over the next four weeks, according to projections from the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.</p> <p>In other words, the pandemic is not yet showing any signs of slowing down. Rather, across the country, states are reporting an increase in numbers.</p> <p>California reported more than 1,000 Covid-19 deaths in just two days and hospitalizations are at record-high levels, with nearly 23,000 patients admitted with the virus.</p> <p>In Los Angeles County, one person now dies of Covid-19 every eight minutes.</p> <p>Arizona's top health official said Thursday that "coming out of the Christmas holiday," the state's Covid-19 numbers are inching upward.</p> <p>"Cases and percent positivity are rising, as are inpatient and intensive care unit beds occupied by those with Covid-19. Regrettably, deaths from Covid-19 follow these trends," Dr. Cara Christ, director of the state's Department of Health Services, said in a video message.</p> <p>Texas reported record-high Covid-19 hospitalizations statewide for the fifth day in a row. Hospitals in Dallas County -- the state's second largest county -- had just 13 adult ICU beds available on Wednesday, County Judge Clay Jenkins said in a tweet.</p> <p>And while vaccinations are now several weeks in, it will be months before they're widespread enough to make a meaningful impact in the pandemic's course, experts have warned.</p> <p>Health officials say they 'overpromised' on vaccine rollout</p>

The vaccine rollout will need a couple weeks to catch up, Dr. Anthony Fauci said Thursday, and if that doesn't happen, changes will need to be made.

"I think it would be fair to just observe what happens in the next couple of weeks," he told NPR. "If we don't catch up on what the original goal was, then we really need to make some changes about what we're doing."

"We just need to give a little bit slack -- not a lot -- but enough to say, well, we're past the holiday season, now let's really turn the afterburners on," he added.

According to the [latest data](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 21.4 million doses have been distributed so far across the country and more than 5.9 million have been administered. The numbers [are a far cry](#) from where officials [initially promised the US would be at this time](#).

"We overpromised and underdelivered as a nation," Dr. Steven Stack, commissioner of the Kentucky Department for Public Health, said at a Thursday briefing sponsored by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. "We only got a third of what we thought we were going to get based on the initial modeling."

"Had we just projected realistic quantities, the public wouldn't have seen this as a shortcoming -- we would have recognized it for the incredible accomplishment it was to have even this much vaccine this fast," Stack said.

Other health leaders said states need more money and more staff in order to be able to administer the vaccines fast enough.

Pennsylvania Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said states, cities and territories had been given just \$340 million to build the infrastructure for vaccine rollouts up until the end of the year.

"That is clearly insufficient to accomplishing what we're trying to accomplish," Levine said.

President Donald Trump signed a [\\$900 billion Covid relief package](#) in December that includes funds for vaccine rollout, something health leaders were "absolutely thrilled" about, Levine said.

The money will be "critical for several aspects of our response," Levine added, including contracting with companies to do community vaccine clinics.

More states announce cases of UK variant

Meanwhile, more states now say they've found cases of the Covid-19 variant first detected in the UK -- making for more than 50 known cases across the country.

Harris County, Texas, health officials said Thursday they found a case in a man between 30 and 40 years old with no travel history -- something that implies the variant has been circulating locally.

Other states that have confirmed cases of the variant include California, Florida, Colorado, Georgia, New York and Pennsylvania.

Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont also announced the state's first two cases, in individuals between the ages of 15 and 25 that had recently traveled outside the state, one to Ireland and the other to New York. But there are some good news: experts have said the Covid-19 vaccines are likely to protect against the variant.

And a new study provides early evidence that the Pfizer vaccine may be [effective against two new Covid-19 strains](#), identified in South Africa and the UK, despite a concerning mutation.

Researchers made a version of the virus that carries the mutation in a lab and tested it against blood taken from 20 people who have received two doses of the Pfizer vaccine as part of a clinical trial.

In research posted online Thursday, they said they found "no reduction in neutralization activity" against the mutated virus.

The study -- conducted by researchers at Pfizer and the University of Texas Medical Branch -- does not test the full array of these mutations and has not been peer-reviewed.

New studies offer more insight on Covid-19 transmission

Meanwhile, new findings now help shed more light on the transmission of the virus.

One team of researchers found that more than half of Covid-19 cases may have been transmitted by people not showing symptoms. It's a model -- not a real-life study -- but based on data from eight studies done in China, about 59% of all transmission came from people without symptoms, the researchers said.

"Across a range of plausible scenarios, at least 50% of transmission was estimated to have occurred from persons without symptoms," the team wrote in the journal JAMA Network Open.

A [separate study](#) found counties where large colleges and universities opened for in-person classes in the fall suffered a significant rise in the incidence of Covid-19.

Within three weeks of colleges or universities opening to in-person instruction, counties that were home to these institutions "experienced a 56% increase in incidence," CDC-led researchers wrote in the agency's weekly report.

Meanwhile, incidence decreased by 5.9% in counties without large universities and by 17.9% in those with universities that held remote classes, they found.

Throughout the course of the pandemic, many universities struggled in their response to the virus, some opting to begin the fall semester with in-person classes and converting to remote after a rise in infections, while others attempted to control spread of the virus by prohibiting events like parties and student gatherings.

In Arkansas, fraternity and sorority gatherings and activities were linked to hundreds of Covid-19 cases at a university, a new report found.

The study, published in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, described more than 960 confirmed and probable cases at an unnamed university in the state -- 97% of which were in people aged 18 to 24.

Researchers from the state's health department and the CDC said 54 gatherings were linked to cases at the university and more than 90% of those events involved sororities and fraternities.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Polar vortex moves; wild winter on way?
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/07/weather/polar-vortex-shifts-arctic-air-south/index.html
GIST	(CNN)The polar vortex appears to be on the move. That's because stratospheric warming is occurring at high altitudes above the North Pole, resulting in a spike in temperatures. That, in turn, could result in bitter cold air pushing southward into the United States within a couple of weeks, though where exactly that Arctic air will swoop down -- and for how long -- remains uncertain.

The polar vortex is simply a low pressure system that swirls cold air around the polar regions of the globe. But the system can sometimes move off the North Pole. In doing so, it releases cold air much farther south in regions such as North America and Europe.

The polar vortex is located in the stratosphere, about 18 miles above Earth's surface, which is well above the jet stream, where planes fly, and where most weather occurs.

But agitations and disruptions to the flow and location of the polar vortex, like what we are seeing to the start of 2021, can influence the movement of air and weather below it. And scientists are closely watching current events for clues as to when and where the impacts will occur.

What is the polar vortex?

Although the term "polar vortex" has become trendy on social media in recent years, the concept is not new. It is a staple for the polar regions every year.

"Some winters, it remains fairly unperturbed. Other winters (like this one), it can be severely disrupted/weakened," Jason Furtado, an assistant professor at the University of Oklahoma's School of Meteorology, said via email.

"Understanding what is happening with the polar vortex is one of several features in our climate that helps meteorologists understand what to expect for winter weather over the next 2-6 weeks."

When the polar low pressure system is strong, it keeps the jet stream traveling around Earth in a very circular path and keeps Arctic air bundled up close to the Pole. But when that system is weakened, parts of the vortex break off and become elongated, resulting in cold air shifting southward.

When that low pressure system is weaker, the jet stream also does not have enough strength to maintain its usual path. It is that disruption in the jet stream that has a direct correlation to our weather closer to the surface.

"When the stratospheric polar vortex is strong, the jet stream tends to move further north, which keeps the cold air in the Arctic and allows relatively milder conditions across much of the United States and Eurasia," Furtado said.

A common reason the polar vortex leaves its usual location is due to a sudden shift of hotter air, known as a sudden stratospheric warming, or SSW. This weakens the polar vortex and allows it to move.

"When the polar vortex is weak, or an SSW event occurs, then the jet stream will tend to be weakened, move further south, and become 'wavier,'" Furtado said. "The effect of these changes is for warmer than normal air to move into the Arctic, colder weather to enter North America and Europe/Asia, and more extreme weather and storms overall in the middle latitudes (e.g., snowstorms)."

The jet stream is the main storm track across the middle latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere and divides colder air to the north and warmer air to the south.

Because the polar vortex is disconnected physically from where most weather occurs, it often has more of an indirect impact on daily weather.

Cold air is more dense, so it sinks, allowing the hot air from the SSW to remain in the stratosphere and the colder air to sink down into the lower levels near the surface. That downward sinking air results in sections of the polar vortex pushing down into lower latitudes of North America, Europe, and Asia.

Recently, a SSW caused the polar vortex to begin shifting away from the North Pole. But where that cold air will end up over the next week or two remains a question. What makes this SSW so special is its intensity, which increases the chances of impacting the Northern Hemisphere.

It's important to note that a disruption in the polar vortex does not garner immediate changes to weather. Instead, its effects are typically delayed.

"In the stratosphere, the polar vortex typically recovers in strength within a couple of weeks of the peak of the event," Furtado said. "However, in the troposphere, the effects of the SSW event (e.g., a further south jet stream, cold and stormy weather) can last for up to 8 weeks. So, these events, which can evolve quickly, can have lasting impacts on the winter weather patterns in the troposphere."

Another thing to note: Even with strong SSW events, there is still no certainty that the US will see direct impacts.

"We actually had two events in the recent past that shows this contrast. There was a major SSW event in February 2018 and one in January 2019, and the after effects of each were very different," Furtado said.

Furtado says we had cold and stormy weather for much of the central and eastern regions of North America following the 2018 event, but minimal effects were felt in North America following the 2019 event.

So, no need to panic about this recent event. But it's certainly something to watch over the next seven to 14 days.

How climate change plays a role

If you have a warming Earth, then it would only make sense for more frequent sudden stratospheric warming events to occur, right? The answer is complex, mostly because no one lives at the North Pole -- other than Santa -- which makes long term historical weather data very hard to come by.

But this doesn't mean climate change isn't impacting the polar vortex.

"We know from observations that the Arctic region is warming at a much faster rate than other parts of the globe (we call this Arctic Amplification)," Furtado said. "The impact of Arctic Amplification is twofold. First, since the Arctic is getting much warmer, when cold air outbreaks occur in North America and Europe/Asia, they aren't as cold as they were decades ago. The second effect (though currently debated in the science community) is that a warmer Arctic is also making the stratospheric polar vortex weaker on the average."

This is why, in theory, a weaker polar vortex should be easier to disrupt, allowing for more frequent SSW events.

The takeaway? Even though a warming planet may mean the overall number of snowstorms across the globe may decrease, the ones that do happen could produce much larger snowfall accumulations.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Rioters identified; some losing jobs
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/07/us/capitol-riots-people-fired-jobs-trnd/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)As images and social media posts of Wednesday's insurrection at the US Capitol circulate online, some of those who were present are being identified, and some have lost or left their jobs because of it.</p> <p>Navistar, a direct marketing company in Maryland, announced that an employee had been terminated after he was photographed wearing his company ID badge inside the breached Capitol building.</p> <p>"While we support all employees' right to peaceful, lawful exercise of free speech, any employee demonstrating dangerous conduct that endangers the health and safety of others will no longer have an employment opportunity with Navistar Direct Marketing," the company said in a statement provided to CNN.</p>

A Texas attorney named Paul Davis is no longer employed at his company, Goosehead Insurance, after social media posts appeared to show him talking about his participation in Wednesday's events. In one video, Davis says, "we're all trying to get into the Capitol to stop this."

In further posts on Facebook's Stories feature, Davis said he was "peacefully demonstrating" the whole time, and was not trying to actively break into the Capitol. "I said 'trying to get into the Capitol,' meaning to voice a protest. Not in any violent way," he wrote.

On Thursday, a Twitter account belonging to the Westlake, Texas-based company tweeted: "Paul Davis, Associate General Counsel, is no longer employed by Goosehead."

CNN reached out to Goosehead for further comment and was directed to a voicemail message that stated, "The Goosehead employee involved at the Capitol is no longer employed."

It isn't clear whether Davis left the company or was terminated. CNN reached out to Davis for comment but hasn't gotten a response.

Rick Saccone, a former Pennsylvania state representative, shared images on his Facebook page of himself outside the Capitol. Saint Vincent College, where Saccone served as an adjunct professor, immediately began an investigation, according to Michael Hustava, the institution's Senior Director of Marketing and Communications.

"As a result of that investigation, Dr. Saccone has submitted and we have accepted his letter of resignation, effective immediately. He will no longer be associated with Saint Vincent College in any capacity," Hustava said in a statement provided to CNN.

"I decided to resign for the betterment of the school," Saccone told the Tribune-Review, a news outlet in Western Pennsylvania, about his departure. "I've been there 21 years. I didn't want all this terrible media kerfuffle to tarnish the school. I decided it would be better if I just resigned."

Saccone, who posted videos from among the crowd on the grounds outside the Capitol building, stated in a Facebook post that everyone around him was "involved in peaceful, first amendment assembly."

CNN has reached out to Saccone for further comment.

Lindsey Williams, a Pennsylvania state Senator, shared a video that appeared to have been deleted from Saccone's Facebook page. In it, Saccone says, "They broke down the gates, they're macing them up there. We're trying to run out all of the evil people in there and all of the RINOs that have betrayed our President. We're going to run them out of their offices."

Americans in positions of power are also being disciplined for their support of the violence, even if they weren't at the Capitol. The Texas Republican Party removed Walter West, its Sergeant-At-Arms, from his position after West made comments on Facebook supporting the Capitol siege.

"Whereas we vigorously support the First Amendment right to freely assemble, we condemn violence and pray for all gathering in our nation's capital and those at the Capitol Building," a statement on the Texas GOP's website reads. "The Texas GOP has always been on the side of law and order and will remain so."

In a statement, West said his Facebook posts were "misinterpreted" and he would never "advocate for violence on 'The People's House.'"

West's name and photograph do not appear on the Texas GOP's list of leadership.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Plans to storm Capitol made in plain sight
SOURCE	https://www.npr.org/sections/congress-electoral-college-tally-live-updates/2021/01/07/954671745/on-far-right-websites-plans-to-storm-capitol-were-made-in-plain-sight
GIST	<p>The mob violence that descended on the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday was the culmination of weeks of incendiary rhetoric and increasingly feverish planning – much of which took place openly on websites that cater to far-right conspiracy theorists.</p> <p>Jared Holt spends a lot of time on those websites. He's a visiting research fellow with the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, where he's been focused on extremist online activity.</p> <p>Since November's election, Holt has seen websites like Parler, Gab, TheDonald, and MeWe fill with torrents of "conspiracy theories, disinformation and outright lies about the results of the election," he says. "And those lies often came from the top arbiters of power in the Republican Party, notably President Donald Trump himself."</p> <p>The day's events brought unprecedented traffic to some niche sites. The CEO of Gab, Andrew Torba, said that the site's traffic was up 40% on Wednesday.</p> <p>More than 80% of the top posts on TheDonald on Wednesday about the Electoral College certification featured calls for violence in the top five responses, according to research from Advance Democracy, Inc., an independent, non-partisan organization.</p> <p>And it wasn't just fringe websites. On Twitter, ADI found more than 1,480 posts from QAnon-related accounts about Jan. 6 that contained terms of violence since Jan. 1. On TikTok, videos promoting violence garnered hundreds of thousands of views.</p> <p>On sites both fringe and mainstream, plans for violence</p> <p>Trump's claims have fueled increasingly heated rhetoric since the election, Holt says – spiking in the last couple of weeks as Trump doubled down on conspiracy theories like the false and unfounded notion that a company that makes electronic voting systems had deleted votes for Trump.</p> <p>"Then it really, really went nuts," Holt says. After Trump promoted a Jan. 6 protest in D.C., "a lot of his extremist supporters interpreted this as a call to action for them."</p> <p>Holt and his colleagues saw fringe social media sites fill with messages organizing logistics for that date, as well as activation of anti-government extremists like militia groups, conspiracy theorists, and white nationalist activists "on a scale and volume that we haven't seen at any other point during the electoral process this cycle."</p> <p>As it became clear over the last week that Vice President Pence was not necessarily going to somehow overturn the results of the election, Holt says the discussion on the right-wing extremist sites turned to taking matters into their own hands.</p> <p>On forum boards like TheDonald and antigovernment and militia movement group chats, those conversations included plans to surround the Capitol on all sides, alongside maps of the U.S. Capitol complex marked with locations of tunnels and entry points. "And there was discussion specifically of overwhelming police with large crowds and doing that in order to violate laws against carrying weapons and against entering federal buildings," Holt says.</p> <p>There wasn't a specific time or a formal plan, "but the discussions to do exactly what we saw [Wednesday] ... this was an idea that was fomenting and spreading and shared approvingly between users in these extremist communities that we've been watching."</p> <p>There was also much discussion on such forums about ways to find and attack Black Lives Matter and antifascist protesters, Holt says. But on Wednesday, those groups largely stayed home. That may have shifted Trump supporters' focus to its eventual target, Holt suggests: "Perhaps the lack of a counterprotest</p>

to receive the violence that all these supporters were so ready to unleash meant that that energy instead was directed at the federal government."

'Maybe it'll happen — probably not. And then it all happened.'

Holt says that even though he was closely monitoring the conversations happening on fringe right-wing sites, he was still taken aback when the overheated rhetoric turned into violent reality.

"I *was* surprised," he says. "One of the challenges of doing the line of work that I do is these are extremist communities and the rhetoric is extreme just *all the time*. It got really, really intense running up to the protest, but oftentimes the ratio of extreme rhetoric to extreme action — there is a little bit of difference there."

But this time, that rhetoric translated into violent action.

Holt says in the preceding days, he had spoken with others about what he was seeing being planned on these extremist sites. "I was like, well, they're talking about doing X, Y, Z. And, you know, maybe it'll happen — probably not. And then it all happened."

So what was different this time — why did the bluster turn into a violent attack?

Holt believes the key factor was the remarks from President Trump and his allies [when they addressed the rally](#) on Wednesday.

When Trump [told his supporters to head to the Capitol](#), Holt says, "I think the levee just broke."

"If Trump had not told people to go to the Capitol, I don't know that it would have happened. Because people on the ground were engaged in some pretty extreme rhetoric about coming back with guns if things don't go their way, and stuff like that. But there wasn't any real sort of significant action happening on the ground until Trump finished his speech."

A conspiracy narrative, fomented for years

[Whitney Phillips](#), researches misinformation and disinformation at Syracuse University. On Wednesday, "I saw what I have been expecting to see for the last several months, even several years," she says.

In the march toward the 2020 election, "at every turn Trump and his enablers in Congress and in the media ecosystem were parroting some version of the 'deep state' narrative," she says.

Trump avoided using the term for years while promoting its ideas, laying the groundwork for what is happening now, Phillips says — and when he lost the election, he then used that narrative "as a bludgeon against the American people."

Those who have believed in QAnon or 'deep state' theories have had those ideas reinforced for years by the conspiracy-driven media they consume, as well as elected officials who repeat them.

The result is that now, amid election results contested by Trump, "this is a well-established narrative way of being in the world. It's not even a conspiracy theory — it is an identity," Phillips says.

"So what happened in the Capitol is really the culmination of months and in some cases years of belief in the sort of paradigmatic world in which you have a very clear set of bad guys who are out to get Trump, and you have a very clear set of good guys who are fighting that battle."

A reckoning

In the coming weeks, the niche platforms that have provided safe haven for extremist movements will come under increased scrutiny, Holt predicts. "And these companies, which don't have the same legal defenses or resources or infrastructure that a major site like Facebook or Twitter has, may falter under that pressure. But that remains to be seen."

Holt says Wednesday's events show that the current approach to combating disinformation and extremism online isn't working. That approach is often reactive, rather than proactive.

"Oftentimes, by the time a Facebook or a Twitter cracks down on certain pieces of misinformation, it is far too late to halt its spread," he says. "I think as a society and as a nation, we are beyond the point of overdue for a serious comprehensive examination and discussion about how we're going to fix this problem. Because if we don't, the next time could be worse."

And Phillips says that reckoning must not only concern platform moderation, or only Trump and his enablers – but as rather recognize these events as the culmination of decades-old forces and beliefs. "What we need to reckon with is not what happened yesterday, but everything that led us *to* yesterday," she says. "And until we're really willing and able to look back that far and take inventory of what's happened, then we're only ever going to be slapping BandAids on grotesquely broken arms."

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HEADLINE	01/07 DOH: 264,012 cases, 3634 deaths
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/coronavirus/article248342700.html
GIST	<p>The Washington state Department of Health reported 3,353 new cases of COVID-19 and 29 deaths Thursday.</p> <p>Pierce County reported 302 cases Thursday and one new death. Pierce County has a total of 322 deaths likely caused by COVID-19 as of Thursday, according to the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.</p> <p>Statewide totals from the illness caused by the coronavirus are 264,012 cases and 3,634 deaths. The case total includes 10,611 cases listed as probable. Those numbers are up from 260,659 cases and 3,605 deaths on Tuesday. DOH revises previous case and death counts daily.</p> <p>Washington's population is estimated at about 7.6 million, according to U.S. Census figures from July 2019.</p> <p>HOSPITALIZATIONS</p> <p>As of Dec. 19, the date with the most recent complete data, 96 people with confirmed cases of COVID-19 were admitted to Washington state hospitals.</p> <p>Preliminary reports indicate average daily hospital admissions were 96 in late December.</p> <p>Out of the state's total staffed intensive care unit beds (1,223), approximately 81.7% (999) were occupied by patients Thursday. Of those staffed ICU beds, 19.8% (242) held suspected and confirmed COVID-19 patients.</p> <p>CASE RATES</p> <p>For the past seven days, Washington had a case rate of 34.6 per 100,000 people. Five states are lower.</p> <p>Bottom of Form</p> <p>The national rate for the same period is 68.7 per 100,000, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>New Jersey has the highest rate in the United States at 136.7. Hawaii is the lowest at 10.</p> <p>VACCINE</p> <p>According to the CDC, 121,354 people have been vaccinated with a first dose in Washington and 518,550 doses have been delivered to the state as of Thursday. Currently approved vaccines require two shots for maximum effectiveness.</p>

Currently, Washington state is in [phase 1A of vaccinations](#). That phase includes high-risk health care workers, high-risk first responders and residents and staff of congregate living settings such as nursing homes.

On the national level, 21.4 million doses have been distributed and 5.9 million people have received the first shot of the approved vaccines. The population of the United States is approximately 328 million.

TESTING

On Dec. 27, the most recent date with confirmed testing data, 5,831 specimens were collected statewide, with 17.5% testing positive.

The average positive test rate for the seven days prior was 10.7%. More than 3.9 million tests have been conducted in Washington. The test numbers reflect only polymerase chain reaction tests, which are administered while the virus is presumably still active in the body.

COUNTY NUMBERS

King County continues to have the highest numbers in Washington, with 66,998 cases and 1,093 deaths. Pierce County is second in cases, with 27,769. Snohomish County has the second-highest number of deaths at 408.

All counties in Washington have cases. Only four counties have case counts of fewer than 100.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Fast trains test thru Tacoma, Lakewood
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article248344970.html
GIST	<p>Three years after the first train run on Amtrak's Point Defiance Bypass ended in a fatal derailment, testing is set to begin in January with trains running up to 79 miles per hour.</p> <p>Amtrak will run test trains between the Tacoma Dome Station at Freighthouse Square and the Nisqually Junction, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Jan. 16 and 17, Sound Transit CEO Peter Rogoff announced Thursday.</p> <p>A reopening date for passenger trains on the 14-mile route has not yet been announced.</p> <p>New safety measures have been installed along the route since the derailment. That inaugural run on Dec. 18, 2017 ended with a disastrous crash onto Interstate 5 that killed three men and injured more than 70 people. The derailed Cascades train, it was later determined, had not slowed before approaching a curve just before crossing a bridge over I-5.</p> <p>The train was unable to complete the turn, left the track and sent rail cars onto I-5, closing the freeway for days.</p> <p>The bypass route and passenger train use of it is a joint project of Amtrak, Sound Transit and the state Department of Transportation. Each agency has specific roles.</p> <p>Currently, Amtrak passenger trains, including both the Los Angeles to Seattle Coast Starlight and the regional Cascades, use a route that runs along Tacoma's waterfront, underneath Ruston, under the Narrows Bridge and along Puget Sound before merging with the bypass route east of I-5 near the site of the derailment.</p> <p>During testing, trains will run just under 80 miles per hour along some of the bypass route which goes through Tacoma, Lakewood and DuPont.</p>

	<p>“Travelers may experience some traffic delays at railroad crossings, and the public is asked to use extreme caution as always around railroad crossings,” Rogoff said.</p> <p>Rogoff said Sound Transit has conducted extensive outreach to Pierce County communities.</p> <p>“We have demonstrated, I think, to them and everyone else that all of the necessary safety measures that Amtrak is expected to take before this testing have been fully submitted and reviewed and approved,” Rogoff said.</p> <p>Sound Transit will continue to update communities as Amtrak conducts more testing, Rogoff said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Light rail Federal Way, Tacoma costs rise
SOURCE	https://www.thenewtribune.com/news/local/article248328485.html
GIST	<p>Getting light rail to Tacoma by 2030 is now going to cost \$3.3 billion — a 10% increase — the Sound Transit executive board was told Thursday.</p> <p>Reductions in tax and fare revenue brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic along with rising costs in real estate and construction are pushing up the cost of the planned line from Federal Way to the Tacoma Dome.</p> <p>The new cost estimate for the roughly 10-mile extension is up from a previous \$2.99 billion estimate in 2019.</p> <p>Sound Transit deputy CEO Kimberly Farley called 2020 a double bind year: Revenues declined but costs continued to increase.</p> <p>“The construction industry remains strong,” Farley said. “Property values are setting records despite COVID-19 recession and the agency’s revenues are declining.”</p> <p>Although the Federal Way to Tacoma segment is early in its design phase, it will travel mostly in public right of ways, reducing real estates costs compared with other Sound Transit projects. The bulk of the increases are coming from stormwater collection requirements and the elevation of three miles of track along Interstate 5 that was originally planned to be at-grade, the agency said.</p> <p>The track is being elevated due to environmental and tribal cultural concerns, said Don Billen, Sound Transit’s executive director of planning.</p> <p>“We would recommend elevating the alignment in this area in order to avoid potential impacts to those resources on and near tribal lands,” he told the board.</p> <p>The Tacoma project’s increase of 10% is a fraction of other similar projects. The West Seattle and Ballard extensions are going up by 53-59%.</p> <p>“These numbers are really quite sobering,” Sound Transit CEO Peter Rogoff said Thursday. “They’re not catastrophic.”</p> <p>Costs can be reduced by building projects in phases and over time to take advantage of financing opportunities at the local, state and federal levels, Rogoff said.</p> <p>Projects currently under construction, such as the Tacoma Link Hilltop extension and the Angle Lake to Federal Way Link extension, were not affected by the cost increase. Only the planned projects were affected because the Sound Transit board hasn’t selected which proposed version of each project is to be built. It also hasn’t established their final cost estimates or construction schedules.</p>

	<p>The voter-approved 2016 Sound Transit 3 plan included an extension of Tacoma Link to Tacoma Community College. It will now face a 36% increase.</p> <p>In Tacoma, the Hilltop Link extension is now 70% complete, Sound Transit said Thursday. The expanded operations and maintenance facility near Freighthouse Square should be mostly completed by the end of March. The extension is scheduled to open in 2022.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Wash. lawmakers plan in-person session
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/politics-government/article248348680.html
GIST	<p>Washington state lawmakers are defending their plan to open the legislative session in person next Monday following the siege of the nation's Capitol building in Washington, D.C., as well as the storming of the governor's property in Olympia by President Donald Trump's loyalists — including some who were armed and attacked or threatened journalists.</p> <p>Leaders from both parties spoke during an online preview of the legislative session hosted by The Associated Press on Thursday, saying that the state Constitution requires lawmakers to meet in person, that gathering in the Capitol would be safer than elsewhere, and that it is crucial to demonstrate that lawmakers will not be intimidated from doing the people's business.</p> <p>"While our democratic republic is fragile in a lot of ways, it is also as tough as nails," said Democratic House Speaker Laurie Jinkins of Tacoma. "The elected representatives want to exercise their constitutional duties and responsibilities, and we intend to do that."</p> <p>The Capitol building will remain closed to the public and lobbyists during the 105-day session due to the pandemic, and lawmakers will do their work through a mix of virtual meetings and on-site votes. Lawmakers' agenda includes dealing with pressing issues related to the pandemic, such as support for struggling businesses and renters, and police reform.</p> <p>A right-wing militia had encouraged its members to occupy the Capitol when the Legislature meets, and that intention was echoed by several of those who broke down a gate outside the governor's mansion Wednesday and stormed the porch and front yard. An armed participant used pepper spray on one journalist and threatened others, including an AP photographer, with death if they didn't leave within five minutes.</p> <p>"I cannot imagine being in your situation and that terror, and I'm glad you're safe," Republican Sen. Shelly Short, of Addy, told one of the threatened journalists during the preview Thursday. "But if we start to bend to this, it just gets worse. ... We have to show we're ready to take on the business of the state."</p> <p>An organizer of the planned occupation of the Capitol, Tyler Miller of the group Hazardous Liberty, canceled the event in a Facebook post Wednesday night. In an interview Thursday, he said the event was intended to be peaceful and that it was designed to protest the closure of the Capitol with the Legislature in session, when the state Constitution mandates: "The doors of each house shall be kept open, except when the public welfare shall require secrecy."</p> <p>Lawmakers have said that streaming legislative proceedings live online and on the state's public affairs television network meets that obligation. They are meeting in person Monday largely to adopt rules that will allow them to meet virtually during the rest of the session.</p> <p>"Due to our political leaders being non-responsive and the 100% likelihood that our event will be hijacked by people with ulterior motives, we have decided to cancel the Legislative Lockout event," Miller wrote. "Please support the other rallies that are happening in and around Olympia this weekend and coming week."</p>

Miller said he did expect some individuals to try to enter the Capitol and observe the proceedings despite the cancelation.

Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee acknowledged Thursday that the Washington State Patrol did not have adequate resources outside the mansion. He said he was disappointed and could not explain why the police response was so meager compared to the robust law enforcement presence Black Lives Matter demonstrators faced earlier this year on the Capitol campus.

“We’re going to have to get answers,” he said.

The outnumbered troopers did not make arrests, apparently for fear of further inciting the crowd, but the patrol has said it will investigate.

Inslee thanked journalists for working professionally in the face of threats and called on Republicans who have long tolerated or fanned the president’s lies to help break the spell of his “hallucinatory, cult-like activities.” He also called Trump a “cancer” and said he must be removed from office by any legal means necessary.

The governor said he planned to meet late Thursday with Washington State Patrol Chief John Baptiste and Maj. Gen. Bret Daugherty of the Washington National Guard to discuss whether to call out the National Guard to help ensure peace next week.

“Whether the guard is or is not involved, we’re committed to security,” Inslee said.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Washington’s new phased recovery plan
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/coronavirus/article/wa-phased-regional-reopening-covid-plan-explained-15848796.php
GIST	<p>After months of changing coronavirus restrictions across Washington, the state is once again taking a new approach.</p> <p>Starting Monday, the state will adopt the new "Healthy Washington—Roadmap to Recovery" plan, which involves reopening the state by regions using a phased approach. Right now, the Healthy Washington plan includes only two phases. Every region will start in the first phase, and will remain there until it meets the metrics needed to move forward. The state will be looking at four key metrics to decide when regions can move forward in the plan.</p> <p>To move to Phase 2, regions must have a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">— 10% decrease in cases per 100,000 people over the previous two weeks, when compared to the two weeks prior— 10% decrease in new COVID-19 hospital admission rate per 100,000 people over two weeks— ICU occupancy less than 90%, including COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients— Coronavirus positivity rate less than 10% <p>To stay in Phase 2, regions need to meet at least three of the four following metrics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">— Decreasing or flat trend in cases per 100,000 people over the previous two weeks— Decreasing or flat trend in new COVID-19 hospital admission rate per 100,000 people over two weeks— ICU occupancy less than 90%, including COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients— Coronavirus positivity rate less than 10% <p>Counties that move to Phase 2, but then don’t continue to meet those guidelines, will be moved back to Phase 1.</p>

As of Monday, all counties will start in Phase 1

“Our intent is to ensure that regions, the communities within them, and our state as whole have a balanced path toward recovery from the pandemic that relies on multiple key metrics that look at disease trajectory and health system capacity” Deputy Secretary for COVID Response Lacy Fehrenbach said.

“This plan offers the start of clear way forward as we continue to slow the spread of COVID-19, while we get more people vaccinated over the next few months.”

All counties will be split up into eight regions across the state:

East: Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille, Lincoln, Spokane, Adams, Whitman, Garfield, Asotin

North Central: Okanogan, Chelan, Douglas, Grant

North: Whatcom, Skagit, San Juan, Island

Puget Sound: Snohomish, King, Pierce

West: Grays Harbor, Thurston, Pacific, Lewis

Northwest: Clallam, Jefferson, Kitsap, Mason

Southwest: Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, Skamania, Clark, Klickitat

South Central: Kittitas, Yakima, Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla, Columbia

The new regional approach comes about two months after Gov. Jay Inslee in November put into place a sweeping set of restrictions closing down indoor dining at restaurants and bars and limiting social gatherings. The restrictions came as coronavirus cases and hospitalizations surged across the state, with health officials worried about the potential strain the virus could put on the state's hospitals.

In recent weeks, cases and hospitalizations have been flattening, but still remain high. As vaccination efforts are underway, health officials are hopeful, but are warning the state is not out of the woods yet. Officials are hoping adopting a regional approach and relying on specific key metrics will help the state to reopen its economy while also keeping its residents safe.

Here's what you need to know about what's allowed in the state's new Healthy Washington plan

Indoor social and at-home gatherings:

Phase 1: Prohibited.

Phase 2: Max of five people from outside one's household; two households max.

Outdoor social and at-home gatherings:

Phase 1: Max of 10 people from outside one's household; two households max.

Phase 2: Max of 15 people from outside one's household; two households max.

Worship services:

Phase 1: Indoor occupancy capped at 25%.

Phase 2: Indoor occupancy capped at 25%.

Retail stores:

Retail stores include farmers' markets, grocery stores and convenience stores.

Phase 1: Occupancy capped at 25% at retail stores; curbside pickup is encouraged.

Phase 2: Occupancy remains capped at 25% at retail stores; curbside pickup is encouraged.

Professional services

Phase 1: Occupancy capped at 25%; remote work strongly encouraged.

Phase 2: Occupancy remains capped at 25%; remote work still encouraged.

Personal services

Phase 1: Indoor occupancy capped at 25%.

Phase 2: Indoor occupancy remains capped at 25%.

Bars and restaurants

Phase 1: No indoor dining at bars and restaurants; establishments must close by 11 p.m.; six-person max at tables with a two-household limit.

Phase 2: Indoor dining capped at 25%; establishments must close by 11 p.m.; six-person max at tables with two household limit.

Weddings and funerals

Phase 1: Ceremonies limited to 30 people or less; indoor receptions, wakes or other gatherings are prohibited.

Phase 2: Ceremonies and indoor receptions, wakes or other gatherings are allowed; must follow venue guidelines; if ceremonies serve food and drinks, they must follow restrictions for restaurants and bars; no dancing.

Indoor recreation and fitness establishments

Phase 1: Low risk sports (such as dance, no-contact martial arts, gymnastics and climbing) are allowed for practice and training in groups of no more than five; appointment-based fitness and training in 45-minute sessions are allowed as long as there is no more than one person per 500 square feet.

Phase 2: Low and moderate risk sports competitions can resume, but tournaments are not allowed; fitness and training can open at 25% capacity.

Outdoor sports and fitness establishments

Phase 1: Low and moderate risk sports allowed to resume for practice and training, but no tournaments are allowed; outdoor guided activities such as hunting, fishing, motorsports, parks, camping, hiking, biking, running and snow sports are allowed.

Phase 2: Low, moderate and high-risk sports can resume for competitions, but tournaments are not allowed; sports may have a max of 200 people, including spectators.

Indoor entertainment establishments

Indoor entertainment establishments include aquariums, indoor theaters, indoor arenas, indoor concert halls, indoor gardens, indoor museums, indoor bowling, indoor trampoline facilities; indoor cardrooms and indoor event spaces

Phase 1: Private rentals/tours for individual households of no more than six people allowed; general admission prohibited.

Phase 2: Indoor entertainment establishments can open at 25% capacity; must follow eating and drinking requirements if food is served.

Outdoor entertainment establishments

Outdoor entertainment establishments include zoos, outdoor gardens, outdoor aquariums, outdoor theaters, outdoor stadiums, outdoor event spaces, outdoor arenas, outdoor concert venues and rodeos

Phase 1: Ticketed events only with timed ticketing; limit of groups of no more than 10 people from two households.

Phase 2: Groups of 15 allowed together with a two-household max; max of 200 people including spectators.

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HEADLINE	01/07 West Seattle, Ballard light rail estimate up
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/cost-of-building-light-rail-to-west-seattle-ballard-is-much-higher-than-first-estimated/
GIST	<p>Cost estimates for extending Sound Transit light rail to both Ballard and West Seattle have risen by about \$5 billion — more than 50% — the agency's deputy CEO told agency board members on Thursday.</p> <p>The cost of building light rail between Federal Way and the Tacoma Dome and of constructing a maintenance facility planned in South King County have also increased dramatically, Sound Transit said.</p>

“While these numbers are sobering, they’re not catastrophic,” said Sound Transit CEO Peter Rogoff. He sought to assure board members that the agency has time to control the scope of projects and build in phases as money becomes available.

Sound Transit blames the higher costs primarily on rising real estate prices in densely developed areas where projects would be built, and a hot construction market that has pushed prices higher than expected — even during the pandemic.

For the West Seattle and Ballard light rail lines, more than half of the increase is due to higher prices for land than assumptions made in 2015, before the \$54 billion transit ballot measure was approved by voters.

Projected costs for those two lines went from a total of \$7.1 billion to between \$12.1 and \$12.6 billion, depending on where stations are located and how they are built.

As Sound Transit examined the construction market, staff members found that some contractors increased bids on other projects and lengthened projected project completion-time requests in order to attract enough workers.

The agency absorbed cost increases in bids for Lynnwood and Federal Way light-rail extensions now under construction, said agency spokesperson Geoff Patrick.

Costs also have been driven by project upgrades, such as replacing surface storm water management with underground facilities. Environmental conditions and additional requests from local jurisdictions and members of the public also add to the higher costs.

The bigger price tags come [despite a move](#) from the Sound Transit board to consider forgoing [a \\$450 million tunnel to Ballard](#), a \$200 million tunnel through a West Seattle neighborhood and elevated trackway in Sodo that would have blocked existing light-rail service during construction in favor of cheaper options. However, those options have not been eliminated. The Sound Transit board will make final decisions after reviewing a final environmental impact statement.

Seattle Mayor and Sound Transit board member Jenny Durkan said she had concerns about the cost estimates and the timeline of when the board was informed.

“Some of this information obviously was available at a time when we should have had it while we were deciding and approving increased costs for projects over the last year,” she said.

Durkan, calling the rise a “significant jump,” also said board members should be more flexible in which sites are chosen for stations, especially if the cost of land continues to rise.

Voters in 2016 approved the \$54 billion Sound Transit 3 tax measure to expand regional rail and bus service. The agency had promised West Seattle stations in 2030 and stations in Seattle Center and Ballard by 2035.

Board members will convene in a workshop Jan. 21 to start determining how project plans and schedules should be adjusted based on revenue drops from the COVID-19 pandemic. Part of the equation will depend on Sound Transit’s ability to secure additional money through state and federal sources, Patrick said.

Three West Seattle stations and a larger Sodo station are projected to serve 35,000 daily boardings, while five stations between Ballard and South Lake Union are expected to see daily ridership of 52,000.

ST3 cost estimates were informed by the price of light-rail extensions to Lynnwood and Federal Way along with previously completed projects. The original estimates were “conceptual in nature” and “based on very limited design plans,” Kimberly Farley, the agency’s deputy CEO, said Thursday.

<p>Return to Top</p>	<p>Patrick said actual projected costs will become more clear as projects advance to around 60% of the final design.</p> <p>An independent assessment will review how Sound Transit develops cost estimates to understand where the approach worked, where it has not worked, and what accounts for the differences. A consultant, who will determine whether Sound Transit should use a different methodology going forward, will conduct an expedited review, slated for April.</p> <p>Sound Transit is also considering three sites for its future maintenance base in South King County. The facility is scheduled to open in 2026 and service 140 light-rail cars. A larger site is now needed to accommodate a larger building and additional tracks.</p> <p>A site that includes Dick's Drive-In in Kent was previously a contender but later nixed due to public outcry and concern from Dave Upthegrove, a Sound Transit board member and Metropolitan King County Council member, that the land should be prioritized for transit-oriented development, such as housing, retail and offices, rather than a maintenance base.</p> <p>The cost of the line between Tacoma and Federal Way has grown by more than a third, from its initial estimate of \$2.4 billion to \$3.3 billion, mostly due to new requirements for storm water collection and the elevation of 3 miles of trackway along Interstate 5 that was previously planned to be at-grade.</p> <p>The new alignment will minimize impacts to the Hylebos Creek system and to important cultural and historical areas that staff identified as sensitive through investigations and tribal meetings.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Sound Transit is building new bus-rapid transit projects along Interstate 405 and Highway 522 under budget, thanks to existing roadway owned by the Washington State Department of Transportation and changes in design that reduce the amount of land needed to be purchased.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Jobless claims surge 54% in Washington
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/economy/jobless-claims-surge-54-in-washington-state-with-seasonal-layoffs-health-restrictions/
GIST	<p>New jobless claims in Washington rose sharply last week as seasonal layoffs and ongoing public health restrictions due to COVID-19 continued to hit the state's job market.</p> <p>Washingtonians filed 29,651 new, or "initial," claims last week, a 54% increase from the prior week, the state Employment Security Department (ESD) reported Thursday.</p> <p>That contrasts with the nation as a whole, which saw 787,000 initial claims last week, virtually unchanged from the prior week, according to the U.S. Labor Department.</p> <p>Washington's increase partly reflected seasonal layoffs, ESD officials said. That included the construction industry, where initial claims last week jumped 48.4% over the prior week. Claims from the retail sector were up 53.2%, which "was likely reflective of post-holiday layoffs," said Anneliese Vance-Sherman, an ESD regional economist who covers the Seattle area.</p> <p>Claims rose 47.8% among restaurant and hotel workers, which may reflect continued restrictions on indoor dining imposed by Gov. Jay Inslee.</p> <p>Another hard-hit sector: manufacturing, which saw a 51% increase last week and which has been heavily battered by the pandemic. From January to November 2020, manufacturing employment in Washington fell 7.8%, from 291,400 jobs to 268,600, Vance-Sherman said.</p>

	<p>The ESD didn't release some data it normally posts on Thursdays, including the total number of people receiving benefits, the average time required to resolve a problem on a claim, and how long claimants typically wait to receive their first payment.</p> <p>ESD spokesperson Nick Demerice said the agency didn't include the data this week because recently extended federal benefits have changed the way the ESD calculates who is receiving benefits and how long it takes to pay some claimants. "We will update that when it becomes clear," Demerice said.</p> <p>The agency is rolling out several new benefits authorized in the recent federal stimulus law, including an extra \$300 a week that all claimants will begin receiving starting sometime after Jan. 15.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Germany reviews parliament security
SOURCE	http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20210107-germany-reviews-parliament-security-after-u-s-capitol-riot
GIST	<p>The president of Germany's lower legislative house, Wolfgang Schäuble, on Thursday said officials would examine improvements that could be made to parliamentary security in Germany after the storming of the U.S. Capitol building.</p> <p>Schäuble's office said he would examine "what conclusions should be drawn from this for the protection of the Bundestag," as the lower house is called, in light of the scenes from Washington.</p> <p>The German government has requested its embassy in Washington provide a report on how the "violent excesses could have happened in the Capitol."</p> <p>It is expected that the review will involve consultation with the security representatives of the various political parties in parliament, as well as the state of Berlin and the German Interior Ministry.</p> <p>Chancellor Angela Merkel said the scenes from Washington, D.C. had made her "angry and sad," and that President Donald Trump shared some of the blame for not conceding defeat in last year's presidential elections.</p> <p>However, the revision of security at the Bundestag is not only prompted by the events in Washington. It also comes after demonstrators against coronavirus restrictions tried to storm Germany's parliament building, the Reichstag, in August. Protesters also breached the building in November, prompting questions about security there.</p> <p>Cause for Reflection at Home</p> <p>German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas drew a comparison with the scenes on Wednesday in Washington and the attempts by anti-lockdown demonstrators to enter parliament in Berlin. He also cited deadly far-right terror attacks in the German cities of Halle and Hanau as reasons it would be self-righteous to point the finger at the US without reflecting on matters closer to home.</p> <p>"Even here, in Hanau, Halle, on the steps of the Reichstag, we have had to experience how agitation and inflammatory words turn into hateful deeds," Maas said.</p> <p>Maas had also mentioned events at the Reichstag in his initial response to Wednesday night's violence in a tweet that drew a comparison between the two. He said: "Seditious words turn to violent actions — on the steps of the Reichstag, and now in the #Capitol."</p> <p>Lawmakers from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, some of whom had marched in increasingly aggressive virus-skeptic demonstrations, have been accused of inviting protesters into the German parliament building who went on to harass other lawmakers.</p>

	<p>The AfD on Thursday released a statement denying any links to the protests in front of the Reichstag building last year, and accusing others of seeking to use the latest events in the US to score political points.</p> <p>“Anyone who equates the unrest in Washington with the demonstrations that took place before the Reichstag building in Berlin, and who points to our party’s sympathy for these events, is abusing the anarchist events for political purposes in Germany,” party leaders said in a statement.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Seattle PD seeks community feedback
SOURCE	https://www.capitolhillseattle.com/2021/01/seattle-police-collecting-community-feedback-on-new-use-of-force-proposals/
GIST	<p>After months of protests in Seattle and a stream of examples of excessive force used by police, the Seattle Police Department debuted drafts in December that would alter its policies on use of force and crowd management last month, but advocates say they fall short.</p> <p>Advocates and community groups have spent weeks organizing response to the proposals but there is still time to add your voice. SPD said its deadline for public feedback is Friday.</p> <p>The specific existing policies, which undergo annual review, that the new drafts revise were originally developed in collaboration with the U.S. Justice Department and were approved by a federal court, noted SPD spokesperson Valerie Carson.</p> <p>“Since June, SPD has significantly modified its tactical approach to meeting the evolving nature of this unprecedented series of protest events, responsive to both community concerns and internal discussions around lessons learned,” Carson said in an email, emphasizing changes in SPD policy around crowd management — tactics that faced heavy criticism over the summer for unnecessary escalation with protesters.</p> <p>These changes include “robust emphasis” on tactics that isolate individuals who have broken the law so they can be arrested and reducing the “SPD visible footprint around these events” with the recognition that a heavy police presence can escalate tension.</p> <p>Seattle Community Police Commission senior policy analyst Nia Franco said, however, there is little change to the crowd dispersal tools available to SPD, which would still be able to use tear gas and blast balls under the departmental policy. The CPC has consistently called for limitations on the use of crowd control weapons, including last year when, along with the Office of the Inspector General, and the Office of Police Accountability, it called on SPD to stop using tear gas on protesters.</p> <p>“Their proposed changes completely disregard those recommendations that we’ve made,” Franco said in a Wednesday meeting of the commission.</p> <p>Franco added that, in the CPC’s analysis, the threshold for declaring an assembly unlawful is “much too low.” The criteria for an unlawful assembly, unchanged in these revisions, includes violent acts by four or more people, “significant unpermitted traffic disruption that poses an imminent threat of harm,” and criminal acts in the crowd that can’t be handled through “crowd intervention strategies.”</p> <p>Franco also noted that the policy does not require outside reviews of dispersal orders given by police.</p> <p>New language in the department’s de-escalation tactics policy outside of crowd management similarly does not reach the bar the CPC was hoping for, said Luiza Montesanti, policy analyst for the CPC. The drafts do add the use of “pattern interrupts” as a way to communicate with individuals to get them to comply with police and avoid escalation.</p> <p>“The mandate to de-escalate really needs to be much stronger,” Montesanti said.</p>

There have been few changes, also, to SPD's "core principles" on the use of force, Montesanti pointed out.

"We think that not having any significant change to the core principles also signals that there has not been significant changes to how the department hopes to use force," Montesanti said Wednesday.

For example, Montesanti said the standard for use of force should be higher than "[objectively reasonable](#)," which is based on the perspective of an officer on the scene, not on one with the benefit of hindsight. Factors that play into what is considered "objectively reasonable" force include age, size, and number of officers compared to the number of subjects, which Montesanti argues could open the door for bias and a divisive us vs. them mentality. The "objectively reasonable" term is a standard set by [case law](#), using all circumstances present at the time force was used to judge if it was excessive, Carson said.

One specific tactic newly prohibited in the [draft revisions](#) is "intentionally placing a knee on a prone subject's neck while taking them into custody," which is what a Minneapolis police officer used when killing **George Floyd** last year. Officers also cannot use tire deflation devices on moving cars.

"In our analysis, what we found to be really salient is that the policy still allows for officers to use force on restrained individuals, pregnant people, young children, elderly people, and what they term 'physically frail or disabled' people," Franco said.

The public comment period for the drafts of these policy revisions, which has been open since mid-December, closes **Friday, January 8th**. SPD aims to have updated policies on these issues approved by DOJ and others and submit them for court approval sometime this year.

To add your voice, there are survey links embedded at the end of each draft document. You can find [more information and links to the draft proposals](#) here.

One proposal at the state level would aim to create some uniform tactics for law enforcement across Washington. [The bill](#), introduced by Federal Way Democratic **Rep. Jesse Johnson**, prohibits the use or purchase of tear gas, military equipment like armored vehicles, and creates new rules around vehicular pursuits that hold there must be "probable cause to believe that a person in the vehicle has committed or is committing a violent offense or sex offense."

The state legislature opens its [2021 session next week](#).

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HEADLINE	01/07 Australia: 1 case locks down Brisbane
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/01/08/coronavirus-covid-live-updates-us/
GIST	<p>The discovery of a single case of the U.K. coronavirus variant in otherwise virus-free Brisbane has prompted a three-day lockdown in the Australian city of more than 2.5 million people, an aggressive approach that authorities hope will allow them to stop further transmission of the highly contagious strain.</p> <p>Starting Friday night, people in greater Brisbane will be banned from leaving their homes for all but a handful of essential trips, such as shopping for food or performing work that can't be done remotely. Outdoor exercise is allowed, but only with one other person from a different household. Masks are mandatory outside the home.</p> <p>"If we don't do this now, it could end up being a 30-day lockdown," Queensland's premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk, wrote on Twitter.</p> <p>Authorities announced Thursday that a cleaner at a quarantine hotel had tested positive for the highly contagious variant, the first instance of community transmission in the state of Queensland in nearly four months. The variant had previously been detected in a handful of newly arrived travelers in quarantine</p>

	<p>facilities, but not in the general population. Contact tracers are trying to determine how far it may have spread.</p> <p>Health authorities worldwide have raised concerns that the new variant appears to be extremely transmissible, and instituted travel restrictions aimed at stopping its spread, but few have gone as far as Brisbane. On Friday, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison also announced plans to cut international arrivals at many of the country's busiest airports, and require a negative coronavirus test result before boarding. The country's borders remain closed to nearly everyone except citizens, residents and their families.</p> <p>Despite officials insisting there was no need to stock up on groceries, Brisbane supermarkets were jammed with long lines of panic-buyers after the lockdown was announced, the Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Brazil: China vaccine 78% effective
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/01/08/coronavirus-covid-live-updates-us/
GIST	<p>Researchers in Brazil said a coronavirus vaccine developed by China's Sinovac Biotech was 78 percent effective in Phase 3 trials.</p> <p>It marked the second Chinese coronavirus vaccine to be deemed effective in overseas trials, after Chinese pharma giant Sinopharm said last week its vaccine was 79 percent effective. However, neither company has released detailed data on the trials, prompting criticism over transparency.</p> <p>Brazil's Butantan Institute and local officials held a news conference on Thursday to announce the result. Butantan's director said details had been submitted to Brazil's health regulator Anvisa as part of a request for emergency use of the vaccine, according to Reuters. The researchers said no participants of the trial who took the Sinovac vaccine, called CoronaVac, developed a severe case, and that the vaccine was 78% effective in preventing milder cases of the virus.</p> <p>The efficacy rate for CoronaVac is handily above the 50 percent threshold set by health regulators like the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for coronavirus vaccines. It is lower than the 95 percent efficacy rates for Pfizer-BioNTech's and Moderna's vaccines, but higher than AstraZeneca's 62 percent.</p> <p>The Sinovac vaccine has been the subject of political controversy in Brazil, with President Jair Bolsonaro opposed to CoronaVac due to its country of origin, but Sao Paulo governor João Doria calling it the safest coronavirus vaccine that has been tested in Brazil.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Assessing damage at US Capitol
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/capitol-cleanup-washington/2021/01/07/4497d4f4-50fe-11eb-83e3-322644d82356_story.html
GIST	<p>Outside the U.S. Capitol on Thursday, Sheridan Harvey took out binoculars and gazed hundreds of yards in the distance, looking for evidence of the damage rioters had caused to a complex that is an enduring symbol of American democracy.</p> <p>"You can see the broken windows," Harvey, a retired Library of Congress reference librarian, told her friend Merritt Chesley, a retired Foreign Service officer.</p> <p>On Wednesday, Harvey had devoured an entire bag of Cheetos as the two women texted each other, both watching news coverage of the mob that overwhelmed the landmark at the center of their neighborhood.</p>

“What they’re doing to our country is appalling, appalling, appalling,” Chesley said.

“I was never afraid that the building would fall or that the rioters would take control,” Harvey said. “But symbolically? It was devastating.”

Less than 24 hours after rioters desecrated a singular emblem of Washington power, the nation’s capital struggled to regain a sense of order as work crews cleaned up litter on the Capitol’s grounds and tourists returned to admire its gleaming dome.

Clusters of National Guard troops ringing the complex, along with newly installed security fencing, signaling that the path to normalcy would not be simple or quick.

“It’s reassuring to see it on a lovely, clear day, on the one hand, and I’m happy to see the National Guard,” Laird Treiber, 55, a retired Foreign Service officer who lives in the neighborhood, said as he walked his beagle past the east side of the Capitol. “But what a shame. It’s not something I would expect to see in my lifetime. It’s the kind of thing you see somewhere else, and it’s usually a sign of real trouble.”

Instead of voicing more outrage over the election results, as he had when he marched with thousands of other supporters of President Trump, Kanter said he wanted to make sure the building was secure.

The 67-year-old dentist from Florida still insisted the election was “stolen” from Trump, who has made unfounded allegations about rigged voting for months. But Kanter described himself as upset that the Capitol had been vandalized by hordes of his fellow Trump backers, who overtook police, broke windows and ransacked congressional offices.

“I wanted to see it quiet and peaceful,” he said as he gazed at the building. “I just wanted to see the beauty of it.”

As much as the White House, perhaps, the Capitol is a cultural icon, depicted on the \$50 bill, in countless movies and on postcards. Storming the complex as lawmakers were certifying the election results was akin to “violating a cathedral,” Georgetown University history professor Michael Kazin said.

“Our Constitution, the White House, the Mall, the Capitol — they’re like a secular version of religion,” Kazin said. “Those are the places people know if they know anything about the country.”

Over the course of U.S. history, the Capitol has been the setting for the attempted assassination of President Andrew Jackson, three bombings and several shootings, including the 1998 slaying of two Capitol Police officers. During the War of 1812, British troops torched the building while it was still under construction.

Yet Wednesday’s attack was unprecedented because of the size of the mob, cheered on by Trump, that overwhelmed the police and jammed the Capitol’s hallways and stairwells.

“Most of these previous incidents was a person or a few people doing something dastardly,” said Stephen Hess, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution who writes about government and the media. “These were countless people, swarming in and over the Capitol. It was a stampede. The vision of that was sickening.”

Hess, 87, a D.C. resident who has been decoding the workings of Washington since the 1950s, said he was paralyzed with astonishment as he sat in front of his television for hours watching the mob.

“The Germans bombed Britain, but they were Germans,” he said. “In this case, it wasn’t an invasion. They weren’t our enemy. They were our people — friends, inspired by our president. That’s the horrible thing about it.”

Many of the marauders wore Trump hats or carried Trump flags as they entered the building Wednesday. But on Thursday, there were supporters of the president — like Kanter — who came back downtown and showed reverence for the institutions of government.

Some picked up debris near the White House. At the Capitol, a woman who identified herself only as “Asia” said she had marched Wednesday but retreated once the vandalism had begun. “I didn’t want to be part of that,” she said.

“I’m glad to see there’s not a lot of trash,” she said after emerging from a van with a Maine license plate, wearing a dirt-bike helmet fashioned to look like a skull. “I believe in our country, but I don’t believe in hurting each other. There’s a way to do it, and we messed up.”

A few yards away, Monica Squires, 35, said she did not think the pro-Trump crowd had done anything wrong. She had traveled from California for the Trump rally and saw the mayhem on the Capitol grounds but said she did not enter the building.

“The fact that I saw it with in my own eyes is really so cool,” she said, after returning to the area Thursday in hopes of running into Alex Jones, the right-wing conspiracy theorist. “I feel like I saw history. I don’t see what happened as any kind of desecration. I see it as the government should be afraid of the people. They should listen to our grievances. I thought it was all kind of entertaining.”

After the curfew imposed by D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D) lifted at 6 a.m., the city’s roadways filled with traffic and Washingtonians emerged to buy groceries, walk their dogs and get fresh air.

Daniel Bell, a social-work student who lives in Cleveland Park, visited Black Lives Matter Plaza, near the White House, because he wanted to see the remnants of Wednesday’s “destruction.” He found a largely vacant stretch of asphalt, except for a handful of visitors, some of whom wore hats signaling support for Trump.

Bell, 27, who grew up in the District, said his ingrained sense of security in his hometown has been shaken by the demonstrations in recent months. “My neighbors are kind and caring, but the people who visit?” he said. “I’m not feeling so safe right now. I’ve been terrified since November.”

At 14th and U streets NW, where rioting erupted after Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination in 1968, Delontay Ericson, 28, unloaded folding tables from his van to sell T-shirts emblazoned with the faces of President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala D. Harris.

On most days, Ericson said, he also offers shirts and flags promoting Trump, as well as items that invoke an obscenity to express contempt for the president. But on Thursday, those items remained out of sight.

“All the Trump stuff stays in the bag,” he said. “I’m a capitalist. I don’t need no trouble today.”

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HEADLINE	01/07 Race to preserve D.C. mob digital traces
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/archive-social-media-footage-pro-trump/
GIST	SOME PEOPLE IN the pro-Trump mob that descended upon the US Capitol on Wednesday wore MAGA hats. Others waved Confederate flags, or bedecked themselves in Army surplus gear. An especially memorable member of the insurrection went shirtless, but wore a large Viking hat covered in fur and horns. One accessory was near-ubiquitous: a raised smartphone. An astounding number of the

attackers openly documented themselves and their peers, taking selfies in the Rotunda, gleefully livestreaming their forced entry into the building, and smiling for cheeky photos on their way out, sometimes with trophies pilfered from congressional offices.

One man in the crowd, Derrick Evans, used Facebook Live to show his followers the break-in as it happened, standing shoulder to shoulder in a throng of attackers shouting “Whose house? Our house!” After rushing through a door, Evans hollered “Evans is in the Capitol,” a moment now digitally memorialized. More than 4,000 digital onlookers watched his feed. Some encouraged him in the comments. “We are so proud of all of you us ♡ ♡ ♡,” one woman wrote. It was one of [countless simultaneous livestreams](#) from the mob invading the nation’s congressional home, but Evans’ effort was notable because he himself is a lawmaker, a newly elected Republican state delegate from West Virginia.

Evans [says](#) that he was in the Capitol as “an independent member of the media.” (He did not respond to WIRED’s request for comment.) Although he justified his decision to film, Evans took down his Facebook livestream; his Twitter account, meanwhile, has been suspended. (It’s unclear whether he had also posted footage there.) Other livestreams from participants have been removed by the platforms themselves, part of a scrambling effort by social media giants to scrub their feeds of footage like Evans’ stream. Facebook, for example, has deemed that the storming of the Capitol was a violation of its Dangerous Individuals and Organizations [policy](#), and is removing both praise of the event and footage from its participants. It also blocked the hashtag “#StormTheCapitol.” YouTube, Twitch, and Twitter also removed footage from mob participants.

But as the social platforms—and some of the participants themselves, as they realize how incriminating some of their footage may be—are moving to hide this abundance of documentation, a countermovement of citizen journalists is working just as diligently to preserve the seditious streams and selfies.

West Virginia native Tanner McMullen caught Evans’ livestream after he saw a photo of people he knew on a bus with Evans, riding to Washington, DC. Aghast at what he saw on the video, McMullen decided to record his screen in an effort to make sure there was evidence of Evans’ behavior. “I knew he was going to delete it—he’s an elected official!” McMullen says. “I’d like to think that based on his position of power, he wouldn’t make such a poor decision, but I knew where it was leading.” McMullen posted his recording of Evans’ video to his own Facebook page, where both local and national news picked it up. “I’m glad it’s getting out there, because what he did is just asinine,” McMullen says.

In addition to individual efforts like McMullen’s, a variety of group projects have already started in earnest to preserve images of yesterday’s mob. The journalism and research collective [Bellingcat](#) quickly began to collect all videos, photos, and livestreams of the attack. “Measures that prevent the spread of these materials would certainly make sense, but outright removing them from your platform just banishes them to a digital ether beyond the reach of anyone but the platform’s engineers,” Aric Toler, Bellingcat’s head of research and training, said in an email.

There is recent historical precedent that makes the importance of archiving this footage obvious. Back in 2017, Toler conducted a similar effort to catalog videos from the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. By his estimation, users deleted nearly half of the clips within a few days of the event. “I archived almost all of them,” Toler says, “but if I hadn’t, they’d just be gone, forever. I used a lot of these videos later to help identify some of the more violent types.” This included Daniel Borden, one of the men who would later be [sent to prison](#) for the beating of a Black man in a parking garage during the white supremacist rally.

The FBI is [already calling](#) for tips and footage to help them identify the people who went inside the Capitol building. “Law enforcement can look if they want—the same as anyone else—but we aren’t going out of our way to share it with any law enforcement body,” Toler says. “We’re just collecting footage that is already open source and out there into one place.”

There are now a number of different repositories for this footage, and Bellingcat isn’t the only group working on an archive. On Reddit, a group called DataHoarders began a similar effort, while a collective

known as [Woke](#) is focused on archiving streaming footage, airing it on platforms like Twitch and YouTube, and keeping it for the historical record.

In the past, some citizen journalism efforts focused on open source sleuthing have made high-profile mistakes; for instance, after the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, online amateur sleuths [incorrectly identified](#) suspects, creating additional chaos. But the current crop of citizen journalists collating footage have more straightforward goals—they aim to act as archivists, not detectives.

Woke, for example, was founded during the Black Lives Matter protests this summer with the intention of both providing access to live feeds and archiving the actions. In the past six months, they've archived an estimated 30,000 streams from protests across the country. "The platforms are pretty notorious for pulling them down," says Ryan Carmichael, a streamer who runs Woke's Twitch channel, which had a half a million viewers yesterday.

During Wednesday's riot, Woke pulled a variety of streams, from mainstream news organizations to right-wing figures on the ground, and broadcast them simultaneously, creating a collage of different perspectives on the event. "This is a new thing for the historic record, the fact that people are willingly making public video feeds from the front lines," says Max Goodhart, another member of the Woke collective. "We see ourselves as curators."

These curatorial efforts face a major obstacle: the social networks where they find their footage. Tech giants are under enormous pressure right now when it comes to how to handle right-wing extremists and President Trump, who used Twitter and Facebook to encourage the mob. They have taken unprecedented steps to moderate the president's posts, and their quick action in removing riot footage speaks to how eager they are to appear proactive. But while enforcing their rules on the president may help prevent him from egging on his followers further, the rush to delete videos posted by those very followers may end up making them harder to hold accountable. Meanwhile, citizen journalists are stuck facing the same repercussions as the mobs they're trying to document. Woke, for example, says its YouTube channel received a strike for posting footage of yesterday's event, preventing it from uploading new clips for a week.

It's these kinds of good-faith efforts to quell violence that may end up doing more harm than good. "The idea that it is dangerous for people to see footage of this event that we're seeing around the world is far-fetched to me," says Ben Wizner, the director of the ACLU's Project on Speech, Privacy, and Technology. "Taking down footage of what happened yesterday seems, to me, like an unjustifiable capitulation." With many major figures on the right already attempting to reframe yesterday's events as an attack from leftists in disguise, it could also erase valuable documentation of who was actually there—something that many people will need to see.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Rioters accessed lawmakers computers?
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/qjpwam/rioters-had-physical-access-to-lawmakers-computers-how-bad-is-that
GIST	<p>On Wednesday, hundreds of Donald Trump supporters rioted and stormed the Capitol, getting into the Senate and the offices of some lawmakers, who were hastily evacuated.</p> <p>Given how quickly some staffers and lawmakers had to leave, some of them left their computers unlocked and unattended, and some of the terrorists were photographed in front of them. Cybersecurity experts now worry that the rioters had a chance to get their hands on sensitive data, and more importantly, compromise the security of the whole IT system at the Capitol.</p> <p>"The terrorists/rioters would have easily gained access to congressional files, shared calendars, and emails (including potentially email lists of constituents and supporters for any given congressman)," Ashkan</p>

Soltani, a security researcher and the former chief technology officer at the FTC, told Motherboard in an online chat.

Soltani explained that given that the Freedom of Information Act (which allows the public to request internal public documents) doesn't cover Congress, some of the contents of staffers emails and documents are probably "much more candid in terms of internal plans and deliberations."

"Finally, I do think there is also the potential to implant malware on the internal network via one of these systems since there was physical access," he added.

Some, however, think that the damage will be limited.

A cybersecurity expert who advised the House and Senate IT on securing their networks, and served as a DHS advisor, said that he was not too worried "about the operational security implications of the yokels who took selfies and bragged online about their miscreance."

The expert, who asked to remain anonymous as he was not authorized to speak about the work he did for the government, said that the Capitol's systems "have pretty solid endpoint protections. And I'm pretty sure there will be a review/sweep, but because of the ad hoc fragmentation of Capitol systems management it might take weeks."

Kimber Dowsett, the Director of Security Engineering at [Truss](#) and a former cybersecurity worker in the government said that "if it were my shop, I'd throw everything, including the kitchen sink, at this."

"Remote wipes, rotate creds, the works. And that's just for assets we know were on premises," Dowsett said in an online chat. "There's personal devices in the mix, too, so I think IT is going to need to do a lot of outreach to make sure even stolen personal devices are on their radar."

Matt Tait, a former staffer at the UK spy agency GCHQ, said that Capitol IT administrators will "eventually need to ask some tough questions like why screens didn't auto-lock, for example, and whether they have things like [disk encryption] Bitlocker and making IT systems more robust to being physically unattended."

"But people matter more than computers, and getting everyone to safety was rightly the priority," Tait said in an online chat.

Now that the terrorists have been kicked out, IT staff will have to start assessing the damage. For Soltani, the next step "depends on what level of audit logs they maintain."

"They might have logs that show which accounts accessed which files and systems during the evacuation," he said. That would mean they can see what the rioters accessed and figure out what damage they made. Whether IT needs to consider all systems compromised will depend on how the network and systems were set up in the first place, according to Tait.

"They need to do a deep sweep of the network and IT equipment as well as the building," Tait said. "But if the network has no monitoring for intrusions such that someone having half an hour alone with a computer means the entire network needs to be burned down, then the network needed to be burned down long before."

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HEADLINE	01/07 WHO: Europe tipping point; virus rampant
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/07/europe-tipping-point-covid-running-rampant-who-new-variant

Europe is at a tipping point in the course of the pandemic, the World Health Organization has said, warning that the coronavirus is spreading very fast across the continent and the arrival of a new variant has created an “alarming situation”.

Hans Kluge, the WHO’s Europe director, said that while the arrival of vaccines offered “new tools” to fight the virus, almost half the 53 countries in the region were reporting a seven-day incidence rate of more than 150 new cases per 100,000 people, while a quarter had recorded a more than 10% surge in cases over the past week.

Kluge said countries rolling out the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine could be flexible on the gap between first and second doses, saying a balance should be struck between making the most of limited supplies and protecting as many people as possible.

Some countries including Britain are seeking to counter low vaccine supplies by extending the gap between first and second doses to up to 12 weeks, and by considering lower volume doses of some shots.

“It is important such a decision represents a safe compromise between the limited global production capacity at the moment, and the imperative for governments to protect as many people as possible while reducing the burden of any subsequent wave on health systems,” he said.

Proposals to prolong the gap between first and second dose have generated fierce debate among scientists, with both Pfizer and BioNTech warning that they have no evidence their vaccine would continue to be protective if the second dose was given more than 21 days after the first.

Siddhartha Datta, of the WHO’s vaccine-preventable diseases and immunisation unit, said the organisation acknowledged that some countries would face “exceptional circumstances”, but those choosing to prioritise first doses were “strongly recommended ... to look into robust evidence” of the consequences.

The European region recorded more than 580,000 deaths from Covid in 2020, while the 27 countries in the EuroMOMO excess mortality monitoring project reported a threefold increase in excess deaths compared with 2018 and a fivefold increase over 2019.

Any signs of stabilisation or even decreased incidence in some countries “need to be taken with some caution” because the impact of the holiday period, with its family gatherings and relaxed physical distancing, was not yet known, Kluge said.

More than 230 million people in the region were living in countries under full national lockdowns, he said, with more countries set to announce new measures in the coming week as the more contagious variant first detected in the UK raises increasing alarm.

The mutation had been detected in 22 European countries, Kluge said, adding that while it seemed to produce no significant change in the disease itself – meaning it was “not more nor less dangerous” – its higher transmissibility was cause for concern.

“It is our assessment it may, over time, replace other lineages, as seen in the UK and increasingly Denmark,” he said. Without increased control to slow its spread, there would be an increased impact on already struggling health systems.

“This is an alarming situation,” he said. “For a short period of time, we need to do more than we have done and to intensify the public health and social measures to be certain we can flatten the steep vertical line in some countries.”

Basic measures such as mask wearing, limiting social gatherings, physical distancing and hand washing, along with testing, tracing and quarantine, must be intensified “to bring down transmission, lift the strain on Covid-19 wards and save lives”.

	<p>Kluge said progress on rolling out Covid vaccines was “varied but promising”, adding that the limited supply of jabs and increasing burden on hospitals meant health workers and at-risk groups “must be a priority” for vaccinations to avoid health systems collapsing.</p> <p>Catherine Smallwood, WHO Europe’s senior emergency officer, said that although studies were still ongoing, there was “no indication for the moment” of any impact of the new strain on the efficacy of vaccines.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Asia-Pacific countries tighten restrictions
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/08/global-report-asia-pacific-countries-toughen-covid-curbs-as-cases-grow
GIST	<p>Coronavirus is surging again in countries across the Asia-Pacific region, forcing states of emergency and a fresh spate of lockdowns to prevent it taking hold.</p> <p>Thailand has extended its state of emergency by another month, until 21 February, and tightened travel restriction in parts of the country.</p> <p>Taweasilp Visanuyothin, a spokesperson for the Covid-19 coordinating centre, said on Thursday there were 305 new cases and one death. That brought total confirmed cases to 9,636, with 67 deaths.</p> <p>The government has ordered a partial lockdown around Thailand. Schools, bars, gambling parlours and other public gathering places have been closed. Malls, department stores and restaurants remain open but with limited hours.</p> <p>Since case numbers began growing again in mid-December – after months of few or no local reported cases – most of the new infections have been migrant workers from neighbouring Myanmar who were employed in seafood markets and factories in a province next to Bangkok. Many are housed in dormitories that have been closed off to the public.</p> <p>Indonesia is due to start a mass inoculation programme using a Chinese vaccine in mid-January. It plans to launch vaccinations on 13 January after obtaining 3m doses from China’s Sinovac. The highest Muslim clerical council aims to issue a ruling on whether a Covid-19 vaccine is halal, or permissible under Islam, before the vaccinations begin.</p> <p>With nearly 800,000 cases and more than 23,000 deaths, Indonesia is struggling with the worst Covid-19 outbreak in south-east Asia and authorities are relying on a vaccine to help alleviate dual health and economic crises ravaging the country.</p> <p>Japan declared a state of emergency in Tokyo as the capital region reported a 24-hour record of almost 2,500 infections, while China imposed emergency measures to tackle an outbreak in the northern city of Shijiazhuang.</p> <p>Japan’s outbreak has not been as severe as those in Europe and the US, but the government announced a month-long state of emergency in the capital region on Thursday with new rules targeting restaurants and bars.</p> <p>Businesses are being asked to stop serving alcohol by 7pm and to close an hour after that, and people have been requested to avoid going out after 8pm.</p> <p>The number of new cases reported in China’s Hebei province – which surrounds most of Beijing – fell slightly from a day earlier, which had been the highest tally since July with 63 cases. The total number of cases across mainland China fell to 53 on Thursday with Hebei accounting for 33 of the 37 new locally</p>

transmitted cases reported.

Authorities in Shijiazhuang, the provincial capital of Hebei, have closed schools, cut travel links and begun mass testing.

Elsewhere in the region, residents of **Australia**'s city of [Brisbane](#) have been put into a snap three-day lockdown in an attempt to prevent the spread of the highly infectious UK variant of coronavirus.

Taiwan has managed to maintain its early successful response and [daily life is largely normal](#): of its total 822 cases, the vast majority have been found in returning travellers in hotel quarantine.

Mandatory mask wearing has been expanded to most public places ahead of the flu season, and in the new year [border restrictions were tightened again](#) in response to the emergence of the UK strain.

Globally, there are nearly 1.9 million people known to have died out of just under 88 million confirmed cases, according to the Johns Hopkins University [tracker](#).

The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned that **Europe** needs to ramp up efforts to deal with the new variant that is spreading more quickly.

"This is an alarming situation," said the WHO Europe chief, Hans Kluge, who called on everyone to follow rules on social distancing, mask wearing and staying at home.

Experts see mass vaccinations as the best route back to normality, but the first rollouts have coincided with alarming spikes in deaths and cases across many parts of the world.

The world's poorest countries can expect to start receiving their first vaccine doses between the end of January and mid-February, the WHO has said.

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HEADLINE	01/08 Actions by police backfired spectacularly
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/actions-by-police-before-trump-supporters-attacked-capitol-backfired-spectacularly-11610064600
GIST	<p>U.S. officials said they underestimated the potential for Trump supporters to become a mob who quickly seized the U.S. Capitol for hours, making a series of decisions before the attack that backfired spectacularly.</p> <p>"We have a lot of lessons to learn from this," said the acting U.S. attorney in Washington, D.C., Michael Sherwin, at a briefing Thursday.</p> <p>In the days before the Capitol rioting, law-enforcement officials were alerted to a noticeable uptick in online discussions about Wednesday's pro-Trump protests potentially becoming unruly and targeting the building where Congress would count electoral votes.</p> <p>On Monday, several posters in the chat room boards.4chan.org/pol/ said Trump supporters planned to force an evacuation of the Capitol as lawmakers voted to affirm President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the Electoral College. Multiple posters on a site created last year—TheDonald.win—also discussed storming the Capitol in the days leading up to Wednesday's attack.</p> <p>U.S. officials said that while they took it seriously, they believed such language was common and often hyperbole among far-right groups, and didn't realize the extent of the threat the protesters posed.</p> <p>But Sen. Mark Warner (D., Va.), the ranking Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, said he was in contact with federal law enforcement before the riot and was assured they had the resources and</p>

appropriate intelligence to handle the event. “They were flat wrong,” he said. “Yesterday was an embarrassment to their response.”

Policing tactics in the U.S. have changed in the seven months since George Floyd was killed by Minneapolis police, sparking nationwide protests last year. In Portland, Ore., [months of nightly demonstrations escalated](#) after President Trump sent in federal agents to protect a federal courthouse.

In a letter to federal officials on Monday, Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser urged federal law enforcement to maintain a light footprint for Wednesday’s protests, seeking to avoid the type of show of force that had inflamed tense situations in the city last year.

Earlier this week, Justice Department officials including Acting Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen privately discussed how to handle the planned protest, and concluded they saw little role for themselves in crowd control, according to people familiar with the matter.

Once the Trump supporters reached the grounds of the Capitol, they were left in the hands of the quickly outmanned Capitol Police, shattering windows and freely roaming the halls and vandalizing lawmakers’ offices. The Capitol was more heavily guarded for recent Black Lives Matter protests than Wednesday’s demonstration, where Trump supporters were mostly white men.

“No one can tell me that if it had been a group of Black Lives Matter protesting yesterday...they wouldn’t have been treated very, very differently than the mob of thugs that stormed the Capitol,” Mr. Biden said Thursday, relaying a text message he got from his granddaughter. “We all know that’s true, and it is unacceptable.”

The Capitol Police didn’t respond to questions about the response, but put out a statement that said its officers were “heroic given the situation they faced.” The Capitol Police officers’ union said its officers lacked backup and equipment to control the protesters.

After hours of chaos, Capitol police officers let many of the Trump supporters leave the building once it was secured late Wednesday afternoon, forcing investigators to reconstruct who was involved through videos and other records of the episode, according to U.S. officials. Fifteen of them faced federal charges filed Thursday, including unauthorized entry and firearms charges, with additional federal cases expected in the coming weeks.

One woman, Ashli Babbitt, was killed by an officer as the protesters forced their way into the House chamber. Some officers were hospitalized as a result of the melee, and one died Thursday night of his injuries, the Capitol Police said.

On Thursday, senior lawmakers called the breach a massive failure and promised investigations into the security lapses.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) said he would fire Senate Sergeant-at-Arms Michael Stenger if Mr. Stenger is still in place when Mr. Schumer becomes majority leader. House Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#) (D., Calif.) called for the resignation of the chief of the Capitol Police, Steven Sund, and said she has received notice from House Sergeant-at-Arms Paul Irving that he will be resigning. Mr. Sund submitted a letter of resignation late Thursday.

Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy, who directs Washington’s National Guard, said Thursday that U.S. officials believed the protests would be similar to other recent pro-Trump protests in Washington. He said they “had no wildest imagination that you could end up breaching the Capitol grounds.”

At the Department of Homeland Security, an intelligence unit that commonly issues threat assessments to law enforcement decided not to do so for the protests, believing they didn’t pose a significant security risk, people briefed on the matter said. The assessments are usually jointly issued with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Neither agency would comment.

Mr. Sherwin said investigators had responded to the social media posts—even using them [to charge the leader of the far-right Proud Boys](#) group earlier this week—and that they similarly believed they had prepared for the unrest. “There’s a lot of noise in social media... sometimes a lot of these postings are aspirational, but we took these postings very seriously,” Mr. Sherwin said.

Before his resignation, Mr. Sund promised a thorough review of the agency’s planning, policies and procedures leading up to the melee. He also defended the agency’s efforts, saying in a statement its officers “responded valiantly when faced with thousands of individuals involved in violent riotous actions” as they stormed the building.

As officers tried to control the mob, other officers were forced to respond to reports of pipe bombs and suspicious vehicles nearby, Mr. Sund said. Those devices were determined to be actual explosives, and investigators said they are continuing to try to figure out who made and planted them.

Authorities also had used vacancy rates at area hotels as a way to estimate the size of the potential crowd, which had contributed to undercounting many additional Trump supporters who drove to Washington, D.C., overnight for the day, some officials said.

Thousands of Trump supporters began gathering outside the Capitol Hill grounds by noon, but Capitol Police didn’t request assistance from Washington’s police force until after the building was already breached, a law-enforcement official said, delaying the backup response.

“There was no intelligence that suggested there would be a breach of the U.S. Capitol,” said Washington police chief Robert Contee at a news conference Thursday.

At least 500 federal agents responded when the violence erupted, officials said. Among them were FBI SWAT team agents who had been on standby and were deployed once they were requested, officials said. Agents from the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were sent to the Capitol when requested by police, to clear and secure the scene.

The riot through the Capitol building laid bare the disjointed and overlapping nature of law enforcement authorities tasked with policing protests in the nation’s capital. Local police often handle crowd control issues in the city but cede jurisdiction to Capitol police once on the grounds of congressional buildings. An array of federal agencies headquartered in the city also have agents they can deploy, but quashing riots isn’t their primary mission.

There was no comprehensive plan for how these federal and local agencies and the military would respond in the event of a breach at the Capitol, law-enforcement officials said.

At a news conference Thursday, Ms. Bowser said she had asked for National Guard help to handle protesters in the city, but had no authority to control how the Capitol, on federal land, was protected.

One law-enforcement official dispatched to the Capitol complex during Wednesday afternoon said he was surprised that there appeared to be no tight police perimeter set up around the complex and no clear staging area for law enforcement to enter.

The official said that he and his colleagues had to hop out of their vehicles and put on their tactical gear as Trump supporters milled around them before going into the Capitol, unclear on who was peaceful and who might be dangerous.

“The whole thing felt woefully underprepared. It was like ‘get there and figure it out,’ ” said the official. “There wasn’t command and control. This is not how these things are supposed to go down.”

The official said he was stunned at the level of damage inside, calling it “disgusting.” He said the Capitol Police inside the complex seemed shellshocked when he and his colleagues arrived.

HEADLINE	01/08 Crowd sparked riot in few crucial minutes
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/at-the-u-s-capitol-a-milling-crowd-sparked-a-riot-in-a-few-crucial-minutes-11610067766
GIST	<p>The milling crowd of President Trump supporters had taken his invitation to march on the U.S. Capitol, but upon arriving at the steel fencing at the edge of the building's western lawn, they seemed unsure of what to do next. Then, at 12:48 p.m., a clutch of men in blaze orange hats and military-style vests turned a nearby street corner, marching straight toward them.</p> <p>In a matter of moments, the two groups merged and the crowd swelled to hundreds and surged forward, toppling a metal barricade at the curbside and charging up two small flights of stone steps toward five startled officers of the Capitol Police.</p> <p>The outer security cordon had been breached, and the first siege of the nation's Capitol by American citizens had begun.</p> <p>The seeds of Wednesday's assault on the Capitol were planted steadily over weeks, as Mr. Trump refused to accept his defeat by Democrat Joe Biden in the Nov. 3 presidential election. Mr. Trump urged his supporters to come to Washington to protest on Jan. 6, when Congress was due to convene and formalize the election result; he promised it "will be wild."</p> <p>Later in the day, after the mob stormed into the Capitol building in a riot that resulted in five deaths, Mr. Trump urged his supporters to "stay peaceful." A Capitol Police officer died of injuries sustained in the attack, a woman was fatally shot by police and three others died of medical emergencies.</p> <p>Momentum for action built among many who had come to Washington over the course of Wednesday's chilly morning.</p> <p>As the Trump supporters gathered on the grassy National Mall, a slightly built man with a bullhorn walked around telling people to march to the Capitol once Mr. Trump finished a speech he was scheduled to make later that morning. Another man said he wanted to enter the building by force. Others began spreading the word.</p> <p>At a rally on the Ellipse, just south of the White House, before Mr. Trump's speech, other speakers encouraged the crowd to take their anger over Congress's refusal to rescind the election results to its source.</p> <p>The president's lawyer Rudy Giuliani called for "trial by combat." The president's son Eric commended the crowd for its willingness to "march on the Capitol."</p> <p>"Let's walk down Pennsylvania Avenue," President Trump instructed the crowd at the end of his remarks Wednesday, urging them to make their way toward Congress.</p> <p>As he spoke, a halting surge toward the Capitol had already begun, as small groups of demonstrators walked down Pennsylvania Avenue and the National Mall, converging on a small roundabout at the base of Capitol Hill, a little after 12:30 p.m.</p> <p>There they milled about the street beneath the Civil War-era Peace Monument, looking past a curbside police barricade and a second line of metal barricades to the West Lawn of the Capitol, where five blue-jacketed Capitol Police officers stood at the top of a small flight of steps with their hands in their pockets. Radios blared the concluding minutes of Mr. Trump's speech, and some in the crowd took selfies with the Capitol in the background.</p>

Some expressed confusion about where to go. “I guess this is the place,” one middle-age man in a brown hooded sweatshirt said.

By 12:45 p.m., a few had begun to call over the fences, heckling the Capitol police.

Three minutes later, the contingent of orange-hatted demonstrators standing nearby, many outfitted with helmets, camouflage and body armor, began to march down First Street NW toward the roundabout, chanting “F— Antifa.”

The identities and affiliations of the group in orange hats weren’t immediately clear. Federal authorities investigating the attack on the Capitol are trying to determine the identities of individuals and organizations responsible. Federal authorities dismissed suggestions from some Republican politicians that left-wing groups might be responsible for the rioting. The authorities said they are still investigating whether the rioters were part of coordinated right-wing organizations, or if they primarily acted on their own.

After the group wearing orange hats and military-style vests joined the fray, the confrontation took a more aggressive turn. The crowd, its numbers steadily amplified by people streaming in, began to rock the first line of police barricades at curbside, quickly knocking it down. They proceeded up the first flight of four steps to the remaining metal barricade—the only thing remaining between the rioters and the police and Capitol complex beyond. A few other police officers came running across the lawn to provide aid to the original five colleagues at the fence line.

At 12:53 p.m., the protesters overwhelmed the police line, knocking down the barricades, driving the police uphill and surging by the hundreds onto the Capitol grounds and toward the western front of the building.

With the cordon breached, police tried to take up new positions at the base of the building and on the temporary dais constructed for the presidential inauguration on Jan. 20. Against them was a crowd that was growing larger and more emboldened.

Cheers went up as the first vanguard surged onto the Capitol lawn. When a single Capitol police cruiser raced past behind the crowd, its siren blaring, one demonstrator called out tauntingly: “Where were you before?”

For an hour, from about 1:15 p.m., the two sides battled along the west side of the building. Rioters climbed the inaugural scaffold, some using bullhorns to urge those behind to move forward.

A line of Capitol Police in riot gear jogged in from the north, and attempted to hold the rioters at ground level, arraying across the front of the well beneath the inaugural platform. One story above, police attempted to stop rioters from coming up the narrow path of exposed stone stairs that lead to the terrace outside the Rotunda and the chambers of the Senate and House of Representatives.

Bottles flew up from the rioting crowd toward police on the inaugural dais. Flash-bang grenades fired into the crowd by the police at the stand’s base let off plumes of white smoke; some in the farther reaches of the crowd on the Capitol lawn laughed. Some rioters staggered back from the center of the crowd to douse their eyes and faces after being hit with chemical irritants.

Soon the far-right talk conspiracy theorist Alex Jones appeared atop a vehicle parked on the Capitol lawn with a bullhorn, out of range of the police projectiles, to urge the rioters forward.

Meanwhile, a band of the rioters pressed up the ribbon of stone stair just to the north of the inauguration scaffold. Some climbed inside the scaffold itself and began to rip away its white fabric cladding, waving Trump flags from within as they did.

On a stone landing midway up the stairs, police tried to stop the climbers with long bursts of what appeared to be pepper spray. A man in a blue jacket took a long blast of chemical irritant and hunched immobile for several minutes, but didn't retreat.

Rioters then used canisters they had brought to spray what appeared to be chemical irritants at the officers. Slowly, the police line gave.

Around 2:10 p.m., the rioters overwhelmed the police, driving through them to the top of the stairs and spilling out across the stone terrace. Others began to clamber up the massive granite walls themselves. Some already on top whooped and waved flags.

The Trump supporters had taken the West Front of the Capitol. The chambers of the Congress were mere feet away, protected by an outnumbered band of police and a handful of glass-paned doors.

As rioters made their assault on the west side, hundreds of other protesters circled around to the east. There, shortly after 2 p.m., they pushed past a barricade and police guarding the entrances, pounding at the doors and breaking glass panes.

Rioters from the west pushed their way into the Senate on the north side of the Capitol, according to videos posted on social media, taking staff, reporters and police inside by surprise. Around the same time, another group charged up the steps of the House side, smashing a window and pushing through a doorway into the building.

By 2:35 p.m., hundreds of people had crowded onto the Capitol steps in the center of the east side of the building, singing the national anthem.

Less than 30 minutes later, many of the people who had stormed the House side of the Capitol began emerging.

A man who said he went inside said he and others had done so as a political statement. "Now they're afraid of us," he said. "When the people are afraid of the government, you have tyranny. When the government is afraid of the people, you have freedom."

As D.C.'s 6 p.m. curfew neared, the crowd began thinning out. Reinforcements, decked out in riot gear, arrived to help the beleaguered law enforcement. Officers pushed the remaining rioters out of the Capitol complex.

At dusk, three men in camouflage stood alongside the pedestrian path outside the Senate chamber, swigging water and chatting about their afternoon inside the Capitol. They had roamed through hallways, battling the Capitol police, one said, ransacked offices and saw the marble figures in Statuary Hall adorned with Make America Great Again hats.

The man was leaving with a souvenir: a transparent, plastic riot shield, marked with insignia of the U.S. Capitol Police. Asked if he had acquired it from a cop, the man replied, "I took it from him."

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HEADLINE	01/07 Lawmakers, protesters prepare next week
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/2433037/lawmakers-protesters-prepare-legislative-session-olympia-week/
GIST	Out-of-control crowds in Washington, D.C., and Olympia are part of the reason one local group is canceling its plans to demonstrate at the state capitol in Olympia every day during the legislative session, which starts Monday.

Tyler Miller with [Liberty, At All Hazards](#) was helping to organize an action to protest the fact that the public cannot enter legislative chambers this year to see and interact with legislators in person.

“The likelihood of our event being infiltrated and hijacked was just too great to risk other peoples’ lives,” Miller told KIRO Radio.

Public testimony and observation will be online only due to COVID-19 restrictions.

He says other demonstrators still may carry out their plans to be outside the doors to legislative buildings each day during the session.

Miller says he’s frustrated that lawless protesters have made it impossible for others to be safe, or heard. Meanwhile, state lawmakers are defending their plan to open the legislative session in person on Monday.

Leaders from both parties spoke during an online preview of the legislative session hosted by The Associated Press on Thursday, saying that the state Constitution requires lawmakers to meet in person, that gathering in the Capitol would be safer than elsewhere, and that it is crucial to demonstrate that lawmakers will not be intimidated from doing the peoples’ business.

“While our democratic republic is fragile in a lot of ways, it is also as tough as nails,” said Democratic House Speaker Laurie Jenkins of Tacoma. “The elected representatives want to exercise their constitutional duties and responsibilities, and we intend to do that.”

The Capitol building will remain closed to the public and lobbyists during the 105-day session due to the pandemic, and lawmakers will do their work through a mix of virtual meetings and on-site votes. Lawmakers’ agenda includes dealing with pressing issues related to the pandemic, such as support for struggling businesses and renters, and police reform.

A right-wing militia had encouraged its members to occupy the Capitol when the Legislature meets, and that intention was echoed by several of those who broke down a gate outside the governor’s mansion Wednesday and stormed the porch and front yard. An armed participant used pepper spray on one journalist and threatened others, including an AP photographer, with death if they didn’t leave within five minutes.

Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee acknowledged Thursday that the Washington State Patrol did not have adequate resources outside the mansion. He said he was disappointed and could not explain why the police response was so meager compared to the robust law enforcement presence Black Lives Matter demonstrators faced earlier this year on the Capitol campus.

“We’re going to have to get answers,” he said.

The governor said he planned to meet late Thursday with Washington State Patrol Chief John Baptiste and Maj. Gen. Bret Daugherty of the Washington National Guard to discuss whether to call out the National Guard to help ensure peace next week.

“Whether the guard is or is not involved, we’re committed to security,” Inslee said.

The outnumbered troopers did not make arrests, apparently for fear of further inciting the crowd, but the patrol has said it will investigate.

Inslee thanked journalists for working professionally in the face of threats and called on Republicans who have long tolerated or fanned the president’s lies to help break the spell of his “hallucinatory, cult-like activities.” He also called Trump a “cancer” and said he must be removed from office by any legal means necessary.

HEADLINE	01/07 Asymptomatic major source of infections
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/01/07/covid-death-record/
GIST	<p>As the United States marked another grim milestone Thursday with more than 4,000 covid-19 deaths reported in a single day, federal disease trackers said research suggests that people without symptoms transmit more than half of all cases of the novel coronavirus.</p> <p>The findings, which came from a model developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, demonstrate the importance of following the agency's guidelines about wearing a mask and maintaining social distance, officials said. The emergence of a more contagious variant of the virus, first detected in the United Kingdom and discovered in eight U.S. states by Thursday, places the federal agency's conclusion about how the virus is spreading in even starker relief.</p> <p>"Those findings are now in bold, italics and underlined," said Jay C. Butler, the CDC deputy director for infectious diseases and a co-author of the study published in the journal JAMA Network Open.</p> <p>As disease specialists had forecast for months, the coronavirus is spreading with speed and ferocity in the new year, with Thursday's single-day record for deaths underscoring the threat. In the past seven days, U.S. infections, hospitalizations and deaths have hit record highs. Cases reached a record 277,135 on Saturday. And by Thursday, more than 132,000 people were hospitalized in the nation with covid-19, the disease caused by the virus.</p> <p>With more than 363,000 Americans dead since the start of the pandemic, the CDC's most recent forecast predicts fatalities could stand between 405,000 and 438,000 by the end of January.</p> <p>There is no evidence that the surge is being driven by the more contagious strain, known as B117, because if it were, it would have turned up in more of the genomic sequences analyzed by researchers in recent weeks. But health officials fear the variant could make a bad situation worse, driving more patients into hospitals and boosting the covid-19 death toll.</p> <p>On Thursday, three states — Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Texas — reported detecting B117, joining California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia and New York. Health experts have said they believe the virus variant may be present throughout much of the country. The variant is not believed to carry a greater risk of illness or death for individual patients. But experts have been alarmed at the likelihood it is more transmissible, which could result in more people developing covid-19 and, in turn, more deaths overall.</p> <p>"We are in a race against time," said Jennifer Nuzzo, an epidemiologist with the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. "We need to increase our speed in which we act so that we don't allow this virus to spread further and allow this variant to become the dominant one in circulation. The clock is ticking."</p> <p>The need to slow transmission is especially evident in Los Angeles County, where Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer said Wednesday the region was in the midst of "a health crisis of epic proportions." The county has reported more than 200 daily covid-19 deaths in recent days and has about 8,000 people hospitalized with covid-19. Statewide, California reported 583 deaths Thursday.</p> <p>Describing herself as "more troubled than ever before," Ferrer reiterated pleas for residents to follow public health guidance to try to slow the spread and ease the strain on hospitals.</p> <p>"In Los Angeles County, we have doubled the number of people passing away each day, and this reality has upended all aspects of our health-care delivery system," Ferrer said. "Our tragedy continues until we get it together to change our actions."</p>

At Methodist Hospital in Arcadia, northeast of downtown Los Angeles, administrators announced they had adopted crisis care guidelines. According to state guidelines, a hospital is at crisis care level when resources are scarce and the focus shifts to delivering the best care possible under the circumstances, forcing choices that may pose risk to patients.

Three other hospitals have notified the California Department of Public Health that they are approaching or entering that stage, which triggers the mobilization of regional and state resources to better care for patients. The agency did not identify the other three.

Methodist Hospital officials said they had activated a triage team, which includes doctors, community members, a bioethics specialist and spiritual care providers, to “make the difficult, but necessary decisions about allocating limited resources.”

Clifford R. Daniels, a senior vice president and chief strategy officer at the hospital, stressed that care had not been rationed as of Thursday and that all patients are receiving the care they need.

“We hope to never get there,” Daniels said. “It truly is the antithesis of every doctor and nurse in their training to deny care to somebody. We never want to be there. It almost makes me emotional to think in metropolitan Los Angeles in the 20th century that’s something that might happen.”

Administrators have had to redirect resources to accommodate 111 covid-19 patients, including 30 in intensive care, Daniels said. Some who are on ventilators are not in the ICU, where they would normally be treated, and instead are on other wards. Staffing is the biggest concern, he said; the hospital is paying nurses three times its normal rate and “looking at nooks and crannies” to try to find more.

The National Guard has provided five medics and a supervising nurse, Daniels said, while the state sent several more after the hospital moved to crisis care. Hospital officials believe the impact of Christmas and New Year’s Eve gatherings has yet to be realized, he said, and they’re bracing for a growing surge.

“If the demand for hospital services continues at the pace that it’s at now,” he said, “I fear that we may be facing a situation that was once unimaginable.”

The research the CDC released Thursday on how the coronavirus is spread comports with earlier estimates of the contribution of asymptomatic spread.

“It’s certainly confirmatory, but it’s nice to see confirmation,” said epidemiologist Richard Menzies, who directs the McGill International TB Centre in Canada and was not affiliated with this research. “These are pretty believable, solid results.”

Fifty-nine percent of all transmission came from people without symptoms, under the model’s baseline scenario. That includes 35 percent of new cases from people who infect others before they show symptoms and 24 percent that come from people who never develop symptoms at all.

Many factors influence how the coronavirus spreads. The researchers took an admittedly uncomplicated approach — Butler called it “a fairly simple mathematical model” — and used that to assess several scenarios, varying the infectious period and the proportion of transmission from people who never develop symptoms.

The model consistently predicted asymptomatic spread accounted for roughly half of viral transmission. But Muge Cevik, an infectious-disease expert at Scotland’s University of St. Andrews, argued some of the model’s assumptions are flawed.

Cevik also noted the study does not account for the environment where the spread occurs.

	<p>“Maybe asymptomatic transmission is important, but it may be much more important in long-term care facilities and households,” Cevik said. “That might mean that we need to do much more targeted testing for high-risk populations,” as opposed to mass screening.</p> <p>Whether vaccines stop coronavirus transmission is not yet certain, and was not a scenario addressed in this model. “The data on the impact of the vaccines on asymptomatic infection are very limited,” Butler said, though he anticipates more information in coming months.</p> <p>The clinical trials for two vaccines authorized by U.S. regulators in December concluded the vaccinations are highly capable of preventing symptomatic illness. But those trials did not determine whether vaccinated people are still able to spread the pathogen.</p> <p>“If they were asymptomatic but equally contagious, then that’s going to have quite an impact on the epidemic,” Menzies warned.</p> <p>As of Thursday, more than 21 million doses of coronavirus vaccine had been distributed to states, and just under 6 million had been administered, according to CDC data.</p> <p>National Institutes of Health Director Francis S. Collins acknowledged in an interview with The Washington Post this week that U.S. distribution got off to a “rocky beginning” but said he was “not totally surprised by that.”</p> <p>“The next couple of weeks are going to be really critical to see how we can get this distribution system up and going more smoothly,” Collins said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Post-infection immunity still after 8mo.
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/post-infection-coronavirus-immunity-usually-robust-after-8-months-study-shows/2021/01/07/d7d369a6-511a-11eb-b96e-0e54447b23a1_story.html
GIST	<p>The human body typically retains a robust immune response to the coronavirus for at least eight months after an infection, and potentially much longer, researchers said in a study published in the journal Science. About 90 percent of the patients studied showed lingering, stable immunity, the study found.</p> <p>The coronavirus has been shrouded in unknowns and uncertainties since it emerged a little more than a year ago, and one of the biggest questions has been whether people can get reinfected, and if so, how quickly. There have been isolated reports of people having a second case of covid-19, the disease caused by the virus, but that appears to be rare, and the new study bolsters the case that immunity usually persists.</p> <p>The review of blood samples from nearly 200 patients also saw that multiple elements of the immune system — not just antibodies — continued to be effective at recognizing and responding to the virus. The human body appears to retain a memory of the invader and is poised to generate a coordinated counterattack of antibodies and killer T cells quickly if exposed again.</p> <p>This comes amid concerns about mutant variants of the coronavirus, including one originally identified in the United Kingdom and spreading rapidly there. As of Thursday afternoon it had been seen in seven states in the United States, including two new additions, Texas and Pennsylvania.</p> <p>Scientists have been generally optimistic that these variants will be unable to escape the onslaught of the human immune system. But no one is taking any chances. Officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are ramping up a strain surveillance program to improve the genomic sequencing that allows scientists to study mutations.</p> <p>The authors of the new study said they believe their findings would apply to the United Kingdom variant as well as the more common coronavirus. The reason: The immune responses target hundreds of different</p>

pieces of the virus, few of which are affected by the mutations seen so far. The consensus is that the coronavirus would need a tremendous number of transmission-enhancing mutations in concert to evade natural or vaccine-induced immunity.

“There’s a lot of different arms of the immune system recognizing the virus. So if you have a mutation, it wouldn’t evade all these different arms,” said Daniela Weiskopf, a co-author of the study and a researcher at the La Jolla Institute for Immunology.

The immune response to a virus builds gradually, peaks, then begins to contract — but can reach a plateau, and stay there for a long period. After eight months, Weiskopf said, most people who have been infected by the coronavirus and recovered appear to have relatively stable immunity.

“It’s not decaying any further. Based on that, it might be good for many more months, or years,” Weiskopf said.

The full duration of immunity has to remain speculative for now, because the novel coronavirus has been circulating in human beings for barely a year and there isn’t long-term data. The oldest specimens studied by the La Jolla team were obtained about nine months ago, Weiskopf said.

Stanley Perlman, a University of Iowa virologist who was not part of the research team, said the study is welcome news given that some early reports last spring suggested that immunity to the coronavirus might wane quickly.

“This is more believable, and this is done well. This supports the notion that there’s going to be immunity for some period of time,” Perlman said.

It is still possible for someone with immunity to get infected by the coronavirus without becoming sick, Perlman noted. The immune response is unlikely to be sterilizing. “People get infected, but they don’t get affected,” he said.

There is one obvious cautionary note in the new research: About 10 percent of people infected with the coronavirus see their immune response degrade. There is no clear explanation for why this happens in some people. The human immune system is enormously complex, and the immune response varies greatly from person to person.

“The kind of immunity you get from natural infection is very variable. And it’s kind of reminiscent of the fact that we can have a tremendous variability in clinical outcomes” from coronavirus infections, said study co-author Alessandro Sette, also with the La Jolla Institute.

What that means in practical terms is that people who have gotten sick with the virus, or have had a positive test result, cannot know with certainty that they’re in the 90 percent who have lingering immunity, Sette said.

“If I had covid, I would still not throw away my masks, I would not go to rave parties. People still need to be responsible,” Sette said. “It’s like driving a car where you know you have 90 percent probability that the brakes work.”

Still, this encouraging scientific result suggests that the human immune system is up to the job of dealing with this novel coronavirus.

“I cannot tell you what it’s going to be looking like two years from now, because the virus hasn’t been around two years,” Sette said. “But from the looks of it, I wouldn’t be surprised if the immunity would last for years.”

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HEADLINE	01/07 BLM outrage: double-standard of justice
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/us/capitol-trump-mob-black-lives-matter.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>While protesting the police killing of a Black teenager in Ferguson, Mo., several years ago, Johnetta Elzie said she was manhandled by officers. She said they pointed rifles at Black women who were pushing toddlers in strollers and cursed at them to turn around.</p> <p>Similar scenes unfolded all summer, as police officers clashed with scores of Black Lives Matter protesters. Many times, officers used batons and chemical agents to disperse crowds.</p> <p>And so what Ms. Elzie saw on television Wednesday afternoon infuriated her: A mob of mostly white Trump supporters stormed past police officers and vandalized the United States Capitol while officers, after initially offering resistance, mostly stood by. Some officers parted barricades, others held doors open and one was seen on video escorting a woman down steps.</p> <p>“What a joke,” Ms. Elzie said. “I mean, they didn’t even pinch the white people. It wasn’t even like a family dispute. In a family dispute, you might at least hit your sister or something like that. This wasn’t even that. It was almost like tear-gas was not readily available.”</p> <p>Black Lives Matter activists across the country expressed outrage on Thursday at what they said was a tepid response from law enforcement officers to mostly white protesters, saying it stood in stark contrast to the aggressive tactics they have endured for years — officers in full riot gear who have used tear-gas, rubber bullets and batons. It also underscored the country’s uneven system of justice, many said, and lent credence to their insistence that Black people are devalued and viewed as inherently dangerous.</p> <p>In a national address Thursday afternoon, President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr. acknowledged the seemingly disparate treatment, saying he had received a text message from his granddaughter who questioned the police response at the Capitol.</p> <p>“She said, ‘Pop, this isn’t fair. No one can tell me that if it had been a group of Black Lives Matter protesting yesterday, they wouldn’t have been treated very, very differently than the mob of thugs that stormed the Capitol,’” he said, adding, “We all know that’s true. And it is unacceptable. Totally unacceptable.”</p> <p>Officials with the Capitol Police, a federal law enforcement agency responsible for securing the Capitol building, have defended Thursday’s response, saying the officers were under prepared and overwhelmed by the pro-Trump mob.</p> <p>Joel Shults, a former police chief of Adams State University in Colorado, said “the right balance of quelling a disturbance versus allowing the disorder to continue” was a difficult calculation for law enforcement to make. Every case presents its unique challenges, he said, adding that a lack of information and the location of Wednesday’s riot might have influenced the police’s response — and not the race of the largely white crowd that stormed the building.</p> <p>“To have a lot of citizen-police violence on the steps of the Capitol,” he said, “I think it was really important that that not happen.”</p> <p>Black activists noted that when they have planned protests, the police have rarely seemed ill prepared. This week, for instance, National Guard troops descended on Kenosha, Wis., and metal barricades were erected around that city’s courthouse the day before a prosecutor announced that no charges would be filed against an officer who shot a man, Jacob Blake, multiple times in the back last summer.</p> <p>Last summer, a peaceful violin vigil in Aurora, Colo., to memorialize a Black man who died during a police arrest was disrupted when officers in riot gear charged the park and dispersed pepper spray, sending families with children fleeing. The police argued that there was a small group of agitators among the</p>

crowd, a contention disputed by many in attendance, who had been sitting on the lawn listening to people play the violin when the police descended.

And the day after the presidential election in November, hundreds of activists marched through the streets of Minneapolis, advocating for an end to police brutality. The group, which was spirited but peaceful and included parents with children, eventually marched onto an interstate. The plan was to walk to the next exit, something that should have only taken about 15 minutes, said Sam Martinez, one of the organizers.

Instead, the State Police surrounded the group while on the highway and demanded that everyone sit down to be arrested. Local elected officials frantically tried to negotiate with the authorities to let the demonstrators leave the highway, to no avail.

The police, saying that the demonstrators violated the law and endangered public safety by entering the highway, either arrested or cited and released nearly 650 protesters. The process took about five hours. Most were given misdemeanor charges, but a 19-year-old woman [received felony riot charges for shining a laser pointer](#) into the eyes of a police officer.

“It’s a glaring example of how unjust this system really is,” said Mx. Martinez, noting the disparity between the hundreds of arrests on the highway versus the handful of arrests at the Capitol. “If that had been us, there would have been way more than one casualty.”

The highway protest in Minneapolis came months after city police officers killed George Floyd, sparking widespread protests and calls for an end to systemic racism. Amid chaotic demonstrations in the days following the killing, the police retreated from a police precinct headquarters, allowing protesters to descend on it and burn it down.

But even that was not comparable to what unfolded at the Capitol on Wednesday, said Jeremiah Ellison, a Minneapolis City Councilman. In the days preceding the burning of the precinct, the police had been firing rubber bullets and tear-gas at protesters in what Mr. Ellison said he believed was an overreaction at times.

The police at the Capitol did not show that same hostility toward the demonstrators there, he said.

“I think the police will view a leftist protester with a gas mask as more dangerous than a right-wing protester with a semiautomatic rifle,” Mr. Ellison said.

Activists who protest the police say they believe they are targeted because of their criticism of law enforcement.

In a federal lawsuit against the city of St. Louis, a judge wrote in a 2017 ruling on a preliminary injunction that the plaintiffs were likely to prevail on their claim that the Police Department “has a custom or policy of using chemical agents without warning on citizens” criticizing the police.

The lawsuit centers on the arrest of more than 120 people in 2017 during a protest of the acquittal of a white officer who killed a Black man in St. Louis. Earlier that evening, some protesters had broken windows and knocked over large flower pots downtown. The police declared an unlawful assembly and ordered people to leave.

Hours later, there were still dozens of people peacefully milling about a downtown street corner that was a few blocks from where the police had told the crowd to leave. Officers eventually moved in and arrested everyone who was still out — sweeping up members of the Air Force who happened to be in the area and at least one journalist in the process.

Video of the mass arrest showed one officer firing pepper spray at the people being arrested, “who all appear to be on the ground and complying with police commands,” Judge Catherine D. Perry of Federal District Court wrote in her injunction.

	<p>Javad Khazaeli, a lawyer representing several of the plaintiffs, said that even though his clients were peaceful, “The police made the choice to use violence.”</p> <p>But the Capitol Police on Wednesday “made the choice” not to, he said. “It couldn’t be a more perfect example for everybody to see the two different criminal justice systems we have in America.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Boeing \$2.5B settlement 737 MAX debacle
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/business/boeing-settlement-justice-department.html?action=click&module=News&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>Boeing agreed to pay more than \$2.5 billion in a legal settlement with the Justice Department stemming from the 737 Max debacle, the government said on Thursday. The agreement resolves a criminal charge that Boeing conspired to defraud the Federal Aviation Administration, which regulates the company and evaluates its planes.</p> <p>The Max was grounded worldwide in March 2019 after 346 people were killed in crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia. The two accidents deeply damaged Boeing’s once-sterling reputation and hurt its relationships with airlines and aviation regulators around the world. The company eventually fired its chief executive and the scandal has cost it billions of dollars in fines, settlements and lost orders.</p> <p>With less than two weeks left in the Trump administration, the agreement takes the question of how a Biden Justice Department would view a settlement off the table. President Trump had repeatedly discussed the importance of Boeing to the economy, even going so far last year to say he favored a bailout for the company.</p> <p>There was never a real threat that prosecutors would have sought a criminal conviction. Such a move could have potentially put Boeing, one of the largest U.S. manufacturers, out of business and cost tens of thousands of jobs at the plane maker, its suppliers and other businesses.</p> <p>The criminal charge against the company centered on the actions of two employees who withheld information from the F.A.A. about changes made to software known as MCAS. The software was later implicated in both crashes.</p> <p>“Boeing’s employees chose the path of profit over candor by concealing material information from the F.A.A. concerning the operation of its 737 Max airplane and engaging in an effort to cover up their deception,” David P. Burns, acting assistant attorney general of the department’s criminal division, said in a statement. “This resolution holds Boeing accountable for its employees’ criminal misconduct, addresses the financial impact to Boeing’s airline customers, and hopefully provides some measure of compensation to the crash-victims’ families and beneficiaries.”</p> <p>As part of Thursday’s agreement, Boeing will establish a \$500 million fund to compensate the families of those who died and pay a fine of nearly \$244 million. The company will also pay \$1.77 billion in compensation to its airline customers who were unable to use or take deliveries of the Max, which remains grounded in some parts of the world. American Airlines last week became the first U.S. carrier to resume flights aboard the plane after the F.A.A. lifted its grounding in November, provided Boeing or airlines make certain modifications to the plane.</p> <p>“I firmly believe that entering into this resolution is the right thing for us to do — a step that appropriately acknowledges how we fell short of our values and expectations,” David Calhoun, who was appointed Boeing’s chief executive in January 2020, said in a note to employees. “This resolution is a serious reminder to all of us of how critical our obligation of transparency to regulators is, and the consequences that our company can face if any one of us falls short of those expectations.”</p>

Last January, Boeing said it expected the plane's grounding to cost the company more than \$18 billion. But that was before the coronavirus pandemic brought travel to a standstill, throwing the airline industry into disarray. In 2020, Boeing lost more than 1,000 aircraft orders, mostly for the Max, though more than 4,000 remain.

The Max is a mainstay of the global passenger airline fleet, used for domestic flights or short international trips. As a single-aisle jet, it is the kind of smaller plane airlines have increasingly preferred to use in recent years. It is also more fuel-efficient than its predecessors.

While the deal will resolve one of Boeing's legal problems, others remain outstanding.

Lawyers representing the families of those killed aboard Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 in March 2019 said the allegations in the agreement represent "the tip of the iceberg of Boeing's wrongdoing." Their clients are pursuing a separate civil case against the company.

"The F.A.A. should not have allowed the 737 Max to return to service until all of the airplane's deficiencies are addressed and it has undergone transparent and independent safety reviews — which to date still has not occurred," the lawyers said in a statement.

The settlement will also not affect the criminal investigation into whether the Boeing employees broke the law in connection with knowingly misleading the F.A.A. while the company was seeking approval for the 737 Max. Their actions led the F.A.A. to leave information about the MCAS software out of a final report, which in turn resulted in its omission from airplane and pilot training materials, according to the Justice Department.

That investigation appeared to have some momentum about a year ago as prosecutors had summoned several Boeing employees in front of a federal grand jury. But the speed of the investigation slowed in the months after the pandemic struck in March.

Prosecutors were examining whether a top pilot for the company, Mark Forkner, had intentionally lied to the regulator about the nature of new flight control software. The software, which could push down the nose of the plane, played a role in the two deadly crashes.

Lawyers for Mr. Forkner have previously said that he did not mislead regulators and would never put the safety of pilots or passengers at risk.

Deferred prosecution agreements are often used by the government in criminal cases against corporations. They effectively hold a prosecution in abeyance, allowing companies to temporarily avoid charges if they don't commit wrongdoing for a period of time. In Boeing's case, the charges will be dismissed after three years if Boeing complies with the agreement.

The Justice Department did not seek to appoint an independent monitor to oversee Boeing's compliance — a step the government sometimes takes in such deals — because it said that "the misconduct was neither pervasive across the organization, nor undertaken by a large number of employees."

Wells Fargo agreed to pay \$3 billion in a deferred prosecution deal last February stemming from its mistreatment of customers in its community bank.

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HEADLINE	01/08 SKorea court orders Japan to pay
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/world/asia/south-korea-comfort-women-japan.html?action=click&module=Latest&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	SEOUL, South Korea — A South Korean court on Friday ordered the Japanese government to pay \$91,800 each to 12 Korean women kept as sex slaves for Japan's troops during World War II. The ruling,

the first of its kind in South Korea, is likely to aggravate the already chilly relations between Washington's two key allies in Asia.

"The court recognizes that the accused committed illegal acts and that the plaintiffs suffered extreme psychological and physical pain hard to imagine," Judge Kim Jeong-gon said in his decision.

The ruling is largely symbolic; the Japanese government said on Friday that the Korean court had no jurisdiction over Japan and that it would "never accept" the order. But the decision could further complicate Washington's efforts to bring South Korea and Japan closer together to counter North Korea's nuclear threat and China's growing military influence in the region.

Though South Korea and Japan face similar threats from North Korea, there is a deep-seated mistrust between the two countries rooted in Japan's colonial rule of Korea, from 1910 to 1945. The issue of the Japanese Army's use of Korean and other women as sex slaves is the most emotional historical dispute keeping Seoul and Tokyo apart.

"This is a landmark ruling," said an advocacy group in Seoul that speaks for the women who filed the lawsuits, the Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issues of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan.

A decision on another case, in which 11 former sex slaves are seeking similar compensation from Tokyo, is scheduled for Wednesday.

The advocacy group said that the lawsuits had been filed as part of the women's attempt to confront the Japanese government, which they accused of whitewashing the history of wartime sexual slavery by its military.

"The Japanese government should honor the ruling and pay the compensation immediately," the group said, adding that some of the women had died since filing the lawsuits.

The plaintiffs in the civil lawsuit decided on Friday filed their case with the Seoul Central District Court in 2013. They accused Japan of coercing or luring them into sexual slavery in wartime brothels run for the country's troops. Each demanded 100 million won (\$91,800) in compensation. Only five of the original plaintiffs are still living.

Historians say that tens of thousands of women, many of them Korean, were in the frontline brothels from the early 1930s until 1945. It was not until 1991, when a South Korean woman named Kim Hak-soon made the first public testimony on her painful wartime experiences, that the issue went global. A total of 240 women have since come forward in South Korea, but only 16 — all in their 80s and 90s — are still alive.

The Japanese government did not participate in the trial, refusing to accept notices from the South Korean court informing it of the legal challenge and asking for a response. The court made the notices public online and held its first hearing in April of last year.

Speaking with reporters on Friday, Katsunobu Kato, chief cabinet secretary to Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga of Japan, said that the court's decision was "extremely regrettable" and that the Japanese government had formally protested to its South Korean counterpart.

"We have repeatedly expressed that the Japanese government is not subject to Korean jurisdiction under the principle of exemption from sovereignty under international law," Mr. Kato said.

In its ruling, the court said that it could not accept the immunity claim because the case involved "anti-humanity acts systematically planned and perpetrated by the accused."

Yoon Ji-hyun, director of Amnesty International Korea, said that the ruling was significant because it was “the first time a South Korean court held the Japanese government responsible for the sexual slavery by the Japanese military and opened the way to restore justice for the survivors.”

South Korea’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Friday, “We respect the court’s ruling and will do what we can to help restore the honor and dignity of the comfort women victims.” It added, “We will closely study the impact this ruling will have on diplomatic relations and make various efforts to continue constructive and future-oriented cooperation between the two nations.”

The countries previously tried to close the chapter on World War II sex slaves when Seoul and Tokyo announced in December 2015 what they called a “final and irreversible” settlement.

In the deal, Japan expressed responsibility and apologized anew to the women, promising to set up an \$8.3 million fund to help provide old-age care. Washington hailed the deal. But some of the women have since rejected it, saying it failed to specify Japan’s “legal” responsibility or to provide official reparations.

Kazuhiko Togo, a former Japanese diplomat who is now director of Kyoto Sangyo University’s Institute for World Studies, said that 36 of the 48 women who were alive at the time of the 2015 deal had accepted payments from the funds.

“On the one hand, my position is that as a perpetrator country, at least we need to have several moral obligations to remember, and from that point of view ‘enough’ or not is not a matter which we the perpetrator country should judge,” Mr. Togo said. But legally, he added, “I don’t think the Koreans have the right to pronounce the Japanese guilty.”

Mr. Togo said that if the Korean courts were to try to confiscate Japanese government assets to fulfill the judgment, “Korea and Japan will not be able to maintain normal diplomatic relations.”

He added: “I deeply think this is not in the interest of Korea or of Japan.”

Leif-Eric Easley, a professor of international studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul, said that Tokyo would deem the ruling “an escalation in a pattern of weaponizing history and breaking international agreements.”

He added, “The economic fallout will be difficult to gauge during the pandemic, but the diplomatic implication is to complicate the incoming Biden administration’s plans for trilateral cooperation to deal with North Korea and China.”

Relations between South Korea and Japan had already been frosty for years over another issue from the colonial era: wartime slave labor. In 2018, South Korea’s Supreme Court ruled that Japanese companies must compensate Korean men who had been forced into labor during World War II. Japan vehemently denounced the ruling.

Japan accused South Korea of undermining the 1965 treaty that established diplomatic ties between the two nations, under which Japan provided South Korea with \$500 million in aid and cheap loans. Tokyo insisted that all claims arising from its colonial rule, including those involving forced laborers and so-called comfort women, a euphemism for the sex slaves, had been settled by the treaty.

In 2019, Japan imposed export controls on South Korea in a move widely seen as retaliation for the 2018 Supreme Court ruling. The trade dispute soon spread to security ties, with South Korea threatening to abandon an intelligence-sharing agreement with Tokyo that Washington considered vital to maintaining cooperation among the three nations.

Seoul did not follow through with its threat. But on-and-off attempts by both governments to narrow their differences have gone nowhere. The ruling on Friday will most likely add to the bad blood.

HEADLINE	01/07 Canada politicians face ire for travel trips
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/world/canada/canada-mp-travel-covid.html?action=click&module=News&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>She was the first member of Parliament to announce that she had tested positive for the coronavirus in Canada. About a month after she recovered, she volunteered in a nursing home badly hit by the pandemic as a trained nurse, bathing, changing and administering medication to residents on an infected floor.</p> <p>Her father died in September of a brain hemorrhage, followed weeks later by her uncle.</p> <p>Some might cut Kamal Khera some slack, for her suffering and service during a year that darkly summoned both.</p> <p>But, when Ms. Khera revealed she had flown to Seattle over the holidays to attend a small family memorial, the public reaction was swift and bruising.</p> <p>Denounced on social media as “selfish,” “arrogant” and a “cheater,” she was forced to step down from her parliamentary role as secretary to the minister of international development.</p> <p>More than a dozen Canadian politicians have been pilloried and punished since New Year’s Eve for taking tropical vacations and family trips outside of the country while most of the nation has hunkered under lockdowns.</p> <p>Two of them were among the ruling Liberal Party, including Ms. Khera, who represents Brampton West, a suburb of Toronto that has seen high rates of the virus.</p> <p>“One of the things that has been really, really important throughout this pandemic for Canadians is the sense we’re all in this together, that we’re looking out for each other,” Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Tuesday, during a news conference outside his home, where he’s been working in isolation and delivering updates since his wife tested positive for the virus last March.</p> <p>He added, “That’s why all Canadians were so disappointed to see so many examples of folks who should have known better, doing things that put us all at risk.”</p> <p>Disappointed is putting it gently. Canadians have been seething over the past week, as one repentant politician after another apologized for taking trips out of the country.</p> <p>The fury started in late December, when it was discovered that Ontario’s then finance minister, Rod Phillips, was in the French territory of Saint Barthelemy, commonly known as St. Barts, while his Twitter account issued a Christmas Eve video message from him seemingly sitting by his roaring fire at home, thanking constituents for the sacrifices they had made “to protect our most vulnerable.”</p> <p>Mr. Phillips flew back to Canada on New Year’s Eve and promptly resigned from his post, though he remains an elected official.</p> <p>While some like Mr. Phillips returned from sunny beaches, others admitted to having traveled for more forgivable reasons, like visiting an ailing relative. In all cases, they had not broken any laws — the government has advised against all nonessential travel, without providing any parameters on what qualifies as essential.</p> <p>But their actions went against the guidelines of Prime Minister Trudeau and provincial leaders who beseeched Canadians to celebrate the winter holidays quietly at home, without the parties or family get-togethers that normally mark the season.</p>

They had broken a cardinal rule of Canadian politics that expects elected officials to live pedestrian lives, little different — and certainly not more glamorous — than the general population. And they certainly can't use the job to get perks.

"Canadians will put up with a lot, but one thing they can't put up with is a sense of entitlement," said Shachi Kurl, the executive director of the Angus Reid Institute, a Canadian nonprofit polling firm based in Vancouver. She pointed out that unlike other national leaders, Mr. Trudeau was not among the first Canadians to receive the vaccine before flashing cameras. Instead, he said he would wait his turn.

The country is littered with cautionary tales, from the politician who resigned after expensing a \$16 glass of orange juice, to the deputy mayor who was defeated after spending tax dollars on renting a bunny costume. Twenty-four Sussex Drive, the crumbling official residence of the prime minister, has sat empty for years because the prospect of spending tens of millions of public funds on making it habitable is considered political suicide.

To many, the fact that some Canadian politicians gave themselves permission to hit the beaches while the country's hospitals were filling up was shocking enough. That their trips also disrespected Canada's vaunted socialized health care system, by potentially bringing back a virus and overloading that system crossed another line, noted Christine Straehle, a professor of international affairs at the University of Ottawa.

"People take great pride in health care system in Canada," said Ms. Straehle. "This idea that some people could intentionally jeopardize efforts to protect the health care system — that comes as extremely unacceptable."

Canada is suffering through the virus' deadly second wave, with positive cases and deaths soaring across the country, despite lockdowns in many parts that have kept most stores and restaurants closed for weeks. In Toronto, the country's largest city, indoor gatherings of any kind had been forbidden since November.

Even with the arrival of vaccines, the holiday season was a dark, cold time for many, which made the news of elected politicians leaving the country on tropical vacations, or visiting family when so many others complied with requests to stay home, seem like salt in a wound — or as one conservative columnist put it, getting "our faces rubbed into this don't-give-a-damn attitude." Citizens decorated the offices of at least two Alberta politicians, including one cabinet minister, with leis, once it was revealed they had jetted off to Hawaii.

"Canadian government urges you to avoid travel so you don't bump into them traveling," tweeted

After Mr. Phillips, other politicians began offering their mea culpas, or were smoked out. They came from various parts of the country, and had representatives in all political parties, essentially neutralizing what otherwise could have proven a very effective political weapon.

"It's harder for the opposition anywhere to make this stick to the government, because all parties been implicated," said Lori Turnbull, a political science associate professor and the director of the School of Public Administration at Dalhousie University in Halifax. "What it means though, this whole system looks like it has rot in it. It's such an unfortunate time for this to happen, the government really needs trust right now."

In most cases, the shamed politicians have been contrite and faced political consequences, losing ministerial posts and spots on important political committees, which might dampen creeping cynicism, Ms. Straehle said.

"Canada is a very small place — people have very direct rapport to their politicians," she said from Hamburg, where she currently lives. "They also hold their politicians accountable to a high degree."

	<p>Some debate has surfaced over whether leniency should be shown to politicians who traveled for reasons some would deem essential, such as attending the memorial of an immediate family member. But less than some may expect.</p> <p>“I do not relish the idea of asking anybody to hold off from seeing their family through incredibly trying times, through grief, but it is the sacrifice being asked of all of us to do everything we can to protect one another,” said Mark Holland, the whip of the federal Liberal Party, who announced last Sunday that Ms. Khera and another Liberal member of Parliament had “voluntarily stepped aside.”</p> <p>He added, “If we don’t take those measures exceptionally seriously, I don’t see how we can ask others to.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Areas open schools: uptick virus cases
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/jan/7/covid-19-56-where-college-classrooms-reopen/
GIST	<p>Counties reported a 56% uptick in COVID-19 cases where large colleges or universities held in-person classes, a study has found.</p> <p>Infections increased from 15.3 per 100,000 people to 23.9 per 100,000 from the 21 days before in-person classes began up to three weeks after classes began, according to data that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released Thursday.</p> <p>Conversely, counties with online-only colleges reported a 17.9% drop in infections, from 17.9 to 14.7 per 100,000, during the same period. Counties without large colleges and universities reported a 5.9% decline in coronavirus infections, from 15.3 to 14.4 cases per 100,000.</p> <p>“COVID-19 incidence, hotspot occurrence, COVID-19 related testing, and test positivity increased in university counties with in-person instruction. Efforts to prevent and mitigate COVID-19 transmission are critical for U.S. colleges and universities. Congregate living settings at colleges and universities were linked to transmissions,” the researchers wrote in the CDC study.</p> <p>The study included nonprofit colleges with 20,000 or more students enrolled and their fall start dates and instructional formats.</p> <p>Of the 133 counties with large colleges and universities, 101 that had classes that started from July 27 to Aug. 28 were included in the analysis. Twenty-two of the university counties had remote instruction, and 79 had in-person classes.</p> <p>The researchers compared the COVID-19 incidence, testing rates, percentage test positivity and hot spot status of university counties with online instruction and in-person learning to counties without large colleges during the 21 days before and after classes started.</p> <p>Hot spot occurrences escalated as well with all in-person and remote university counties and non-university counties. University counties with in-person learning reported a 30.4% climb in hot spots followed by remote-instruction university counties with a 9.1% rise and nonuniversity counties with 1.5% increase.</p> <p>Higher testing rates at the county level were reported before the start of the school year in university counties than non-university counties.</p> <p>When comparing the start of classes through day 21 to 21 days before classes began, the average daily testing increased 4.2% and 14.1% for remote instruction and in-person instruction university counties respectively, but dropped by 1% for non-university counties.</p>

	<p>“Understanding the extent to which these settings have affected county-level COVID-19 incidence can inform ongoing college and university operations and future planning,” the researchers wrote.</p> <p>“Testing students for COVID-19 when they return to campus and throughout the semester might be an effective strategy to rapidly identify and isolate new cases to interrupt and reduce further transmissions. Colleges and universities should work to achieve greater adherence to the recommended use of masks, hand hygiene, social distancing, and COVID-19 surveillance among students, including those who are exposed, symptomatic, and asymptomatic,” they wrote.</p> <p>The researchers suggested that improving testing capacity and safety measures could be crucial for higher education institutions in areas where disease spread into the broader community could worsen disparities such as health care access and susceptibility to COVID-19 among populations with underlying conditions.</p> <p>More than 397,000 COVID-19 cases and at least 90 deaths were reported on college campuses as of last month, according to a New York Times analysis of more than 1,900 American colleges and universities.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Capitol officer dies from riot injuries
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/us/politics/a-capitol-police-officer-dies-from-injuries-sustained-during-the-pro-trump-rampage.html?action=click&module=Spotlight&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>A United States Capitol Police officer died Thursday night from injuries sustained when he engaged with a pro-Trump mob that descended on the U.S. Capitol the day before.</p> <p>Officer Brian D. Sicknick died at about 9:30 p.m. on Thursday, the Capitol Police said in a statement. He had been with the agency since 2008.</p> <p>Mr. Sicknick was responding to the riots on Wednesday and “was injured while physically engaging with protesters,” the agency’s statement said, although officials didn’t immediately elaborate on the nature of his injuries or how he interacted with the crowd. After sustaining the injuries, Mr. Sicknick returned to his division office, collapsed, and was taken to the hospital.</p> <p>“The entire U.S.C.P. department expresses its deepest sympathies to Officer Sicknick’s family and friends on their loss, and mourns the loss of a friend and colleague,” the statement said. News outlets had prematurely reported on his death earlier in the day while he was apparently still on life support.</p> <p>Homicide investigators from the Metropolitan Police Department are involved in the case.</p> <p>Early Friday morning, Representative Tim Ryan of Ohio, a Democrat who runs the House Appropriations subcommittee that oversees the budget for the Capitol Police, said in a Twitter post that his heart was breaking over Mr. Sicknick’s death.</p> <p>“This tragic loss is a reminder of the bravery of the law enforcement who protect us every day,” Mr. Ryan wrote.</p> <p>Mr. Sicknick’s death brings the death toll from Wednesday’s mayhem to five. One of the people participating in the pro-Trump rampage, Ashli Babbitt, was shot and killed by a Capitol Police officer inside the building as she climbed through a broken window leading to the Speaker’s Lobby. Three other people died after experiencing apparent medical emergencies in the area around the Capitol, the police said.</p> <p>Officials have said that some 50 police officers were injured as the mob swarmed barricades, threw objects, battered doors, smashed windows and overwhelmed some of the officers who tried to resist the advancing crowd.</p>

	<p>Capitol Police reported 14 arrests during the incursion, including two people who were detained for assaulting a police officer. Local police arrested dozens of others, mostly for unlawful entry and violations of the city's Wednesday night curfew.</p> <p>Steven Sund, the Capitol Police chief, handed in his resignation on Thursday after facing pressure from congressional leaders. The sergeants-at-arms of the House and Senate also resigned.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 More officials resign over Capitol violence
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/article/trump-resignations.html?action=click&module=Spotlight&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>Several Trump administration officials have announced that they are resigning after a mob of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol on Wednesday, temporarily disrupting Congress as it was certifying Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s Electoral College victory.</p> <p>The officials included those in prominent positions in the White House, and staff members who have been working in the Trump administration since the beginning of the president's term in 2017. Some of the resignations came hours after President Trump openly encouraged his supporters to go to the Capitol to protest what he has falsely claimed was a stolen election. The moves are being made with less than two weeks remaining in Mr. Trump's term.</p> <p>Here is a list of the administration officials who have resigned.</p> <p>Betsy DeVos Ms. DeVos, the education secretary, submitted a letter of resignation to President Trump on Thursday, saying she would step down on Friday. In the letter, Ms. DeVos called the mob that disrupted Congress as it was certifying the election results on Wednesday "unconscionable for our country."</p> <p>"There is no mistaking the impact your rhetoric had on the situation, and it is the inflection point for me," she wrote.</p> <p>With her letter, Ms. DeVos became the second Cabinet member to announce plans to resign after violent protesters overwhelmed the police and stormed through the Capitol.</p> <p>A billionaire Republican donor, Ms. DeVos was confirmed as education secretary in February 2017 with a tiebreaking vote in the Senate from Vice President Mike Pence.</p> <p>Elaine Chao Ms. Chao, the transportation secretary, announced her resignation on Twitter on Thursday, becoming the first cabinet member to do so. The unrest at the Capitol, she wrote, "deeply troubled me in a way that I simply cannot set aside." Ms. Chao, whose resignation is effective on Monday, is married to Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the majority leader.</p> <p>Mick Mulvaney Mr. Mulvaney, Mr. Trump's former acting chief of staff, resigned as special envoy to Northern Ireland on Wednesday night, saying he "can't stay" after watching the president encourage the mob that overtook the Capitol complex.</p> <p>In an interview with CNBC on Thursday morning, Mr. Mulvaney said he called Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday night and told him: "I can't do it. I can't stay."</p> <p>Mr. Mulvaney praised administration officials who defended Vice President Mike Pence, who oversaw the tallying of the votes that certified Mr. Biden's victory despite pressure from Mr. Trump. Mr. Mulvaney</p>

said he anticipated that there would be more resignations. “Those who choose to stay, and I have talked with some of them, are choosing to stay because they’re worried the president might put someone worse in,” he said.

On Wednesday afternoon, Mr. Mulvaney, who was [named acting chief of staff in 2018](#), [wrote on Twitter](#): “The President’s tweet is not enough. He can stop this now and needs to do exactly that. Tell these folks to go home.”

Matthew Pottinger

Mr. Pottinger has been Mr. Trump’s deputy national security adviser since 2019. He was formerly the administration’s Asia director on the National Security Council, and was known for his [on-the-ground experience in China](#), where he advised Mr. Trump during his meeting with President Xi Jinping in 2017. [Mr. Pottinger has resigned](#), a person familiar with the events said on Thursday.

John Costello

Mr. Costello, one of the country’s most senior cybersecurity officials, resigned Wednesday, telling associates that the violence on Capitol Hill was his “breaking point” and, he hoped, “a wake up call.”

Tyler Goodspeed

Mr. Goodspeed, the acting chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, resigned on Thursday, citing Mr. Trump’s incitement of the mob that stormed the Capitol. “The events of yesterday made my position no longer tenable,” he said in an interview, after informing the White House chief of staff, Mark Meadows, of his decision.

Stephanie Grisham

Ms. Grisham, the former White House press secretary who served as chief of staff to Melania Trump, the first lady, submitted her resignation on Wednesday after the violence at the Capitol. She had worked for the Trumps since the 2016 campaign and was one of their longest-serving aides.

Rickie Niceta

Melania Trump chose Ms. Niceta, a former Washington event planner who helped coordinate Mr. Trump’s inaugural celebrations, [as her social secretary in 2017](#). [Ms. Niceta has said she was resigning](#), according to an administration official familiar with her plans who was not authorized to speak publicly.

Sarah Matthews

Ms. Matthews, a deputy White House press secretary, submitted her resignation on Wednesday, saying in a statement that she was “deeply disturbed by what I saw today.”

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HEADLINE	01/07 Rioters who stormed the Capitol bldg.
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/us/names-of-rioters-capitol.html?action=click&module=Spotlight&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — There were infamous white nationalists and noted conspiracy theorists who have spread dark visions of pedophile Satanists running the country. Others were more anonymous, people who had journeyed from Indiana and South Carolina to heed President Trump’s call to show their support. One person, a West Virginia lawmaker, had only been elected to office in November.</p> <p>All of them converged on Wednesday on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol, where hundreds of rioters crashed through barricades, climbed through windows and walked through doors, wandering around the hallways with a sense of gleeful desecration, because, for a few breathtaking hours, they believed that they had displaced the very elites they said they hated.</p>

“We wanted to show these politicians that it’s us who’s in charge, not them,” said a construction worker from Indianapolis, who is 40 and identified himself only as Aaron. He declined to give his last name, saying, “I’m not that dumb.”

He added: “We’ve got the strength.”

As the country sifts through the shards of what happened in Washington on Wednesday, what comes into focus in the storming of the Capitol is a jumbled constellation of hard-core Trump supporters: a largely white crowd, many of them armed with bats, shields and chemical spray; some carried Confederate flags and wore costumes of fur and horns inspired by QAnon; they were mostly men but there were women, too.

Those who stormed the Capitol were just one slice of the thousands of Trump supporters who had descended on Washington to protest the certification of Joseph R. Biden’s victory in November over President Trump. Their breach came with a confused and frenzied energy, fueled by the words of Mr. Trump just minutes before and the fervor of the mob standing behind them.

Washington’s Metropolitan Police Department said it had made no additional arrests on Thursday connected to the rioting, during which one woman was fatally shot by the Capitol Police and a [Capitol Police officer suffered injuries from which he later died](#). A day earlier they detained 68 people, plus the 14 picked up by the Capitol Police during the unrest. Dozens more people were still being sought by federal authorities. Their number included a 60-year-old gun rights activist from Arkansas who was pictured sitting in Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s office, men in tactical gear taking selfies in the Rotunda and a woman carrying a QAnon-inspired sign about children in the House chamber.

Some of those who had also surged forward in the crowd seemed to show a bewildered wonder at what they were seeing in front of them. A few remarked on the opulence of the Capitol building and offices, a quality that seemed to confirm their suspicions about the corruption of Washington.

“Yeah look at all this fancy furniture they have,” said a man in a winter parka and red hat, standing on the west side of the Capitol and peering through the glass at empty desks, computer screens and ergonomic chairs. Several people banged on the windows with their fists, including one man who shouted, “Put the coffee on!” One man hit his head, not seeing the outer layer of glass was there, it was so clean.

As people rushed inside, there was a strange mix of confusion and excitement, and the almost complete lack of police presence in the beginning amplified the feeling of lawlessness. They gawked at a place of wealth and beauty, adorned with art and marble, a domain of the powerful, and for a short while on Wednesday afternoon, the rioters were in control. For once, they felt, they could not be ignored.

Aaron, the construction worker from Indianapolis, and his two friends had heard people talking about going to Ms. Pelosi’s office. So once inside they decided to instead find Senator Chuck Schumer’s office. Both are Democrats.

“We wanted to have a few words” with Mr. Schumer, he said. “He’s probably the most corrupt guy up here. You don’t hear too much about him. But he’s slimy. You can just see it.”

But they could not find Mr. Schumer’s office. He said they asked a Capitol Police officer, who tried to direct them. But they appeared to have gotten nowhere near the minority’s leader’s office. They ended up smoking a few cigarettes inside the building — “We can smoke in our house,” Aaron said — and one of his friends, who would not give his name, joked that he had gone to the bathroom and not flushed.

A woman in a coat sat on the couch in a small room with a blue carpet and watched as a man ripped a scroll with Chinese lettering hanging on the wall.

“We don’t want Chinese bullshit,” the woman said.

Nearby, six men sat at a large wooden desk. A lamp with a white shade was knocked over and broken. Someone was smoking pot. “This is the pot room!” a young man said.

In the Crypt, people walked around taking photographs of the statues and themselves with their phones. One man had a selfie stick, like a tourist in a foreign land. A woman in baggy jeans, a blue puffer jacket, was shouting chants into a megaphone, while a man in a black T-shirt that read “Not Today Liberal” ran around the central columns in what looked like a frenetic victory lap.

As the authorities try to identify those in the mob, some will be less hard to pin down than others. The group included some well-known figures from the conspiratorial right, including Jake Angeli, who has pushed the false QAnon claims that Mr. Trump was elected to save America from deep-state bureaucrats and prominent Democrats who worship Satan and abuse children. He was pictured sitting in Congress in a viking helmet and furs. Mr. Angeli, who is known as the “Q Shaman,” has been a fixture in the pro-Trump protests in Arizona since the election, and there are indications that he and other right-wing activists had planned to spark a confrontation with authorities ahead of Wednesday’s rally.

There were also leaders from the Proud Boys, a far-right group whose participants have espoused misogynistic and anti-immigrant views, such as Nick Ochs, a failed Hawaii state legislature candidate and member of a collective called “Murder the Media.” Chris Hood and members of his National Socialist Club, a neo-Nazi group, posted photos on Telegram from outside the Capitol on Wednesday. And the Three Percenters, a far-right armed group, were seen gathered in Washington’s Freedom Plaza on Tuesday night, most wearing helmets and Kevlar vest adorned with the group’s symbol, a Roman numeral three.

The mob came from the broader crowd, tens of thousands of Mr. Trump’s most loyal supporters, many of whom had driven through the night, or taken buses with friends and neighbors, to watch him speak and be part of a day that many hoped would finally hold some answers to what had been months of false claims that the election had been stolen. A number of people interviewed said they had never been to Washington before.

In interviews on Wednesday, protesters in the broader crowd expressed a sense that something would happen — something that was bigger than they were. What exactly it would be no one could say. Before the Capitol was stormed, some hinted darkly about violence and the looming threat of civil war. But when pressed for what that might mean, they tended to demur, saying simply that, if called, they would serve their side in a conflict.

“There’s been lots of people talking about this day coming for a long time,” said Brian Sachtleben, 40, an asphalt truck driver from a small town near Sheboygan, Wis., who was looking at the sea of people spreading from the Washington Monument to the Ellipse, marveling at the numbers, shortly before Mr. Trump began to speak.

When asked what he thought might happen, he said: “I don’t know. I really don’t know.”

He referred cryptically to the Thomas Jefferson quote: “The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.”

Then he added: “I don’t think anything is going to be back to normal ever again.”

He left town before the violence began.

When those who entered the Capitol later re-emerged after their rampage, many were welcomed like returning heroes.

“Yeah, we stopped the vote!” screamed a man in a navy-blue zippered jacket, as he emerged, hands held high, from a tall yellow wooden door, as people outside whooped and cheered. “Murder the media” was scrawled in black marker across the other part of the double door.

	<p>Many said they would not have tried to go in, but they sympathized with those who had.</p> <p>“I’m not going in there, but, yeah, I’m kind of OK with it,” said Lisa Todd, 56, a high school teacher from Raleigh, N.C. She was standing with three friends, all fellow teachers.</p> <p>Others expressed some regret.</p> <p>Storming the Capitol was “probably not the best thing to do,” said Eric Dark, 43, a truck driver from Braman, Okla., who was tear-gassed when he got to the top of the steps to the building but never made it inside.</p> <p>He had been standing with Brian Hobbs, the mayor of Newkirk, Okla., near the top of the steps on the western side of the building around 4:30 p.m. when officers in riot gear started moving to clear out the thousands of people who had gathered.</p> <p>It could have been a lot worse, Mr. Hobbs said.</p> <p>“We had enough people, we could have tore that building down brick by brick,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Grim: another daily record for virus deaths
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/07/world/covid-19-coronavirus#fauci-coronavirus-january
GIST	<p>Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, the top infectious disease expert in the United States, predicted on Thursday that the daily death toll from the coronavirus would continue to rise for weeks to come, and counseled patience with the vaccination program gearing up across the nation.</p> <p>Hours later, officials across the United States reported yet another daily record for deaths, over 4,000. The total for the pandemic in the U.S. has surpassed 365,400.</p> <p>In an interview with NPR, Dr. Fauci said the high toll was likely to continue, and was probably a reflection of increased travel and gatherings over the holidays.</p> <p>“We believe things will get worse as we get into January,” he said.</p> <p>He stressed that it was still possible to “blunt that acceleration” by strictly adhering to public health measures like social distancing and mask wearing.</p> <p>“Now’s not the time to pull back on this,” he warned.</p> <p>The virus has exacted a punishing toll across the United States. In recent days, Wyoming and Arizona been among states that have recorded high per capita rates of virus deaths, according to a New York Times database. On Thursday, Florida reported more than 19,800 cases, the state’s highest single-day total.</p> <p>Dr. Fauci advised Americans to be patient with the snags and delays that have slowed the vaccination effort and provoked widespread frustration.</p> <p>So far, at least 5.9 million people in the United States have received a dose of one of the two Covid-19 vaccines that have been authorized for use, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That figure is far short of the goal federal officials had set to give at least 20 million people their first shots by the end of December.</p> <p>Dr. Francis S. Collins, the head of the National Institutes of Health, said Wednesday he was “not totally surprised” that vaccine distribution had gotten off to a “rocky” start.</p>

“We had this remarkable plan that Warp Speed had put in place to have doses ready to go the very next day after the F.D.A. approval, but that’s a lot of logistics,” [he told The Washington Post](#), referring to Operation Warp Speed, the administration’s vaccine development program. “So maybe we shouldn’t be too shocked that it didn’t go like clockwork.”

He also echoed Dr. Fauci’s warning, and said “the next couple of weeks are going to be really critical.” [But the rollout is beginning to accelerate](#). More people were reported as having received their initial shots in the third week of the vaccine drive than in the first two weeks combined. The C.D.C.’s count rose by 470,000 between Tuesday and Wednesday. and then by another 612,000 between Wednesday and Thursday.

In [a letter](#) on Thursday to Alex M. Azar II, the secretary of health and human services, the American Hospital Association called on the federal government to do more to coordinate what is being done in different states and municipalities.

“Hospitals are committed to be a central part of the vaccination effort, but hospitals alone cannot do it, especially as we care for burgeoning numbers of critically ill Covid-19 patients, and struggle to maintain sufficient staffing work to have enough personal protective equipment and other resources,” Richard J. Pollack, chief executive of the association, wrote in the letter.

Mr. Azar urged the states on Wednesday not to stick too rigidly to the C.D.C.’s guidelines on whom to vaccinate in what order.

“There is no reason that states need to complete, say, vaccinating all health care providers before opening up vaccinations to older Americans or other especially vulnerable populations,” Mr. Azar said at a news conference. He added that, “It would be much better to move quickly and end up vaccinating some lower-priority people than to let vaccines sit around.”

In the NPR interview, Dr. Fauci said that any program on so large a scale would have to overcome stumbling blocks, and that the timing of the rollout, which began around the December holidays, may have added to the delays.

“I think it would be fair to just observe what happens in the next couple of weeks,” he said. “If we don’t catch up on what the original goal was, then we really need to make some changes about what we’re doing.”

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HEADLINE	01/07 France: restrictions, curfews to remain
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/07/world/covid-19-coronavirus#france-coronavirus-vaccine-rollout
GIST	<p>French officials vowed to speed up their vaccination campaign on Thursday, but warned that restrictions and curfews would remain in place in order to halt a rise in infections and hospitalizations.</p> <p>“2021 will be the year of hope,” Jean Castex, the prime minister, said at a news conference, citing the vaccine, which has been administered to about 45,000 people in France so far.</p> <p>But he added: “It is out of the question that we drop our guard in the coming weeks.”</p> <p>Mr. Castex said that the number of new daily infections was still high — hovering around 20,000 — and pressure on hospitals was still acute, with nearly 25,000 Covid-19 patients hospitalized around the country.</p> <p>Mr. Castex announced that cultural establishments that are currently closed, like museums, movie theaters and music halls, would remain shuttered until the end of January at least, and that bars and restaurants</p>

would not reopen before mid-February at the earliest — dashing the hopes of the service industry, which was still hoping to reopen on Jan. 20, as previously scheduled.

An 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew will also remain in place for the time being, Mr. Castex said. In 15 areas of France, that curfew has already been tightened to 6 p.m., and could be similarly restricted in the coming days in 10 new areas. Mr. Castex said he could not rule out new nationwide restrictions, but he added that schools would only close again if the situation became particularly dire.

Mr. Castex also addressed a barrage of criticism over the government's sluggish vaccination rollout, acknowledging that it had started slower than in other countries but attributing the delay to France's initial focus on retirement and nursing homes.

Still, the government vowed to speed things up, promising that at least 1 million people would be vaccinated by the end of the month and announcing that all people older than 75 would be eligible for vaccinations starting Jan. 18.

"We are doing everything to enable you to get vaccinated in good conditions," Olivier Véran, the health minister, said at the news conference, adding that vaccination centers would soon open around the country and that people would be able to go through a simplified sign-up procedure to get their shots.

Mr. Véran also announced that French health authorities had approved administering the second Pfizer vaccine shot up to six weeks after the first shot, instead of the recommended three-week interval.

France also announced on Thursday evening that health authorities had detected two clusters of the new, more transmissible variant of the virus that was first identified in Britain. The clusters were in the Ile-de-France region, where Paris is, and in Brittany. Overall, French health authorities have reported 19 cases of the variant in France, and three cases of a different one first detected in South Africa.

"We want to avoid the spread of this variant in France at all costs," Mr. Véran said of the British variant, adding that health authorities were closely monitoring it.

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HEADLINE	01/07 NYC clashes w/state over vaccinating cops
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/07/world/covid-19-coronavirus#top-officials-in-new-york-clash-over-where-police-personnel-stand-in-the-vaccine-line
GIST	<p>Only a sliver of Police Department employees will be eligible for vaccination in New York City, Mayor Bill de Blasio said on Thursday, despite pledging earlier to vaccinate 10,000 members by the end of the week.</p> <p>The change came after Mr. de Blasio said Wednesday that the state approved vaccines for some home care workers, Department of Corrections employees and other city staff members in emergency response or medical roles — including 25,000 police personnel.</p> <p>"Yesterday I told you about the new state rules that have come out that we interpreted very clearly, very appropriately and very legally to mean we could vaccinate our corrections officers and that we could vaccinate our police officers," Mr. de Blasio said Thursday. "We were told by the state they would not allow that."</p> <p>Under the state's direction, the mayor said, only several thousand New York City medical corp. officers are currently eligible to be inoculated. Mr. de Blasio has urged Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo to expand the pool of people eligible for vaccines so that it could include seniors over the age of 75 as the city's vaccine rollout remains sluggish.</p>

The governor defended the state's approach on Thursday, arguing that [the state did not yet have enough supply to](#) move to the next priority group and that police officers did not qualify as health care workers simply for being trained in C.P.R.

Mr. Cuomo said that the 900,000 or so doses the state had received so far were not enough to inoculate the estimated 2.1 million health care workers statewide who he said are part of the highest priority group, known as Phase 1A.

The governor said the state has administered 430,000 vaccines to date and had ramped up the pace of vaccinations this week, from 30,000 doses administered on Monday to about 50,000 doses expected to be administered on Thursday.

State officials said New York City had administered only 144,000 doses out of the 304,000 it has received since December — less than 50 percent — even though state officials said 917,000 city health care workers could receive the vaccine under Phase 1A.

On Thursday, Mitchell Katz, the head of the city's public hospital system, NYC Health and Hospitals, said that workers in the hospital system who want to be vaccinated had been reached and that it was time to move on to other eligible groups.

"As the days moved on, we found that the demand, after all the people who most wanted it passed, the demand began to decrease," Mr. Katz said. "We now have appointments available and we don't have arms to give that injection to."

Thousands of appointments to receive a vaccine were available, the city's health commissioner, Dr. Dave A. Chokshi, said Thursday. On Saturday, eligible health care workers can begin booking appointments at the two massive vaccination sites opening on Sunday. These sites, one in Brooklyn and the other in the Bronx, will operate seven days a week, day and night.

"Everyone agrees on one thing, we want the maximum number of high priority people vaccinated," Mr. de Blasio said. "Sometimes the federal government and the state government need to stand back and let the local government do what it knows how to do best."

[The governor and the mayor's quarrel on vaccines](#) was on full display on Thursday as each official blamed the other this week and aides to both leaders squabbling on Twitter over how to most efficiently distribute the vaccine.

The mayor's plea has come as [some federal officials have urged states](#) not to stick rigidly to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines about whom to vaccinate first.

"There is no reason that states need to complete, say, vaccinating all health care providers before opening up vaccinations to older Americans or other especially vulnerable populations," Mr. Azar said at a news conference on Wednesday. He added that, "it would be much better to move quickly and end up vaccinating some lower-priority people than to let vaccines sit around."

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HEADLINE	01/07 Official: rapid virus testing to ramp up
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/07/world/covid-19-coronavirus#rapid-virus-testing-will-ramp-up-as-fda-approves-three-new-at-home-kits
GIST	Amid surging coronavirus cases, the top U.S. testing official on Thursday announced another scale-up in the country's diagnostic efforts, touting the importance of tests that can run from start to finish outside the lab.

The government will allocate an additional \$550 million to community-based testing programs across all 50 states, said Adm. Brett Giroir, the assistant secretary for health. The government will also put \$300 million toward 60 million kits for federal distribution to nursing homes and other vulnerable communities.

Dr. Giroir projected that the country's capacity for non-laboratory testing could more than double by June.

In a video livestream, Dr. Giroir held up three new at-home testing kits, designed by Ellume, Abbott and Lucira Health, that recently received emergency green lights from the Food and Drug Administration. All can deliver results in a matter of minutes after a quick nasal swab, though only Ellume's product can be purchased without a prescription.

The Abbott and Ellume tests search for bits of coronavirus proteins called antigens. Lucira's test, like most laboratory-based tests, hunts for genetic material.

Dr. Giroir, who will depart his position on Jan. 19 as part of the transition to the Biden administration, praised the tests as "sophisticated" but cautioned that none were yet in widespread use. Production ramp-ups are in progress, he noted, but might not alter the market for a few months.

Ellume's test, for example, while it will be sold over the counter in a few weeks, will still be available in only very limited quantities.

Experts have repeatedly cautioned that rapid tests are not as accurate or consistent as tests that route people's samples through a laboratory, where they are typically processed with a technique called polymerase chain reaction, or P.C.R.

Rapid tests, which can run from start to finish in a matter of minutes, may also falter more often when used on people without symptoms. Even so, they are often used — as a way to frequently screen some populations like nursing home residents and schoolchildren.

But rapid tests typically have cost and convenience on their side — benefits that Dr. Giroir repeatedly underscored in a call with reporters. He noted the slow and bumpy rollout of testing in the United States, where speedy tests results are still a relative rarity.

Dr. Giroir said it was "not yet obvious" whether widespread at-home testing would be successful.

Susan Butler-Wu, a clinical microbiologist at the University of Southern California's Keck School of Medicine, said at-home testing might streamline the testing process. People who feel sick could test themselves and determine whether they need to isolate or seek treatment in a matter of minutes.

But outsourcing testing to the general public also carries risks.

Incorrect results, for example, could be tougher to catch, interpret and act on when people test themselves at home. False negatives might embolden people to mingle with others, hastening the spread of the virus, while false positives could unnecessarily keep people out of work or school.

And both types of errors could erode public trust in testing.

Dr. Butler-Wu also noted that rapid test results might not make it to the right care providers and to public health officials when collected at home.

If results aren't properly reported, she said, "you're flying blind — you don't know the prevalence in your community."

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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/07/world/covid-19-coronavirus#experts-say-the-capitol-hill-riot-was-probably-a-super-spreader-event
GIST	<p>The mob that stormed the Capitol yesterday did not just threaten the heart of American democracy. To scientists who watched dismayed as the scenes unfolded on television, the throngs of unmasked intruders who wandered through hallways and into private offices may also have transformed the riot into a super-spreader event.</p> <p>The coronavirus thrives indoors, particularly in crowded spaces, lingering in the air in tiny particles called aerosols. If even a few of the pro-Trump extremists were infected — likely, given the current rates of spread and the crowd size — then the virus would have had the ideal opportunity to find new victims, experts said.</p> <p>“It has all the elements of what we warn people about,” said Anne Rimoin, an epidemiologist at the University of California, Los Angeles. “People yelling and screaming, chanting, exerting themselves — all of those things provide opportunity for the virus to spread, and this virus takes those opportunities.”</p> <p>President Trump has downplayed the pandemic almost since its beginning, and many of his supporters who entered the Capitol yesterday did not appear to be wearing masks or making any effort at social distancing. Under similar conditions, gatherings held in such close quarters have led to fast-spreading clusters of infection.</p> <p>Similar concerns were raised by the Black Lives Matter protests in the summer. But most of those were held outdoors, and greater numbers of participants seemed to be masked. Research afterward suggested that they were not super-spreading events.</p> <p>But hundreds of rioters shouting in crowded rooms and hallways for extended periods of time can infect dozens of people at once, Dr. Rimoin and other experts said.</p> <p>The melee was most likely a super-spreader event, said Dr. Joshua Barocas, an infectious diseases physician at Boston University, “especially given the backdrop of the highly transmissible variants that are circulating.”</p> <p>The prospect that members of Congress may have been exposed, amid an already difficult transfer of power, particularly disturbed some scientists.</p> <p>“I am worried not only that it could lead to super-spreading, but also super-spreading to people who are elected officials,” said Dr. Tom Inglesby, director of the Center for Health Security at Johns Hopkins University.</p> <p>Representative Jake LaTurner, Republican of Kansas, announced on Twitter early Thursday morning that he had tested positive for the virus. Mr. LaTurner was cloistered in the chamber with other members of Congress for much of the day.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 More states detecting coronavirus variant
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/07/world/covid-19-coronavirus#more-states-are-detecting-the-highly-contagious-virus-variant
GIST	<p>The list of states to identify the dangerous new coronavirus variant is growing.</p> <p>Texas, Connecticut and Pennsylvania confirmed their first cases on Thursday, joining California, Colorado, Georgia, Florida and New York.</p> <p>Florida has at least 22 confirmed cases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. California has reported at least 26.</p>

Experts have warned that [the United States is woefully ill-equipped](#) to track the [rapidly transmissible](#) variant. Without a robust, national system to identify genetic variations of the coronavirus, states are left on their own to identify the variant.

The Texas Department of Health and Human Services said an adult male resident of Harris County, which includes Houston, with no history of travel tested positive for the coronavirus. Genetic sequencing this week showed that the infection was caused by the variant.

“The fact that this person had no travel history suggests this variant is already circulating in Texas,” Dr. John Hellerstedt, the commissioner of state health services, [said in a statement](#). “It’s not surprising that it showed up here given how rapidly it spreads.”

Dr. Hellerstedt urged Texans to “redouble our commitment” to social distancing and public health measures.

In Connecticut, Gov. Ned Lamont said [two individuals between 15 and 25 years old](#) had tested positive for the variant. Both had traveled outside of the state, he said, one to Ireland and the other to New York. Genetic sequencing showed the cases are unrelated.

Pennsylvania also reported that its case was because of [international exposure](#).

Last month, Britain became the first country to identify the new variant, which is now surging there and burdening its hospitals with new cases. Now, the variant has been identified in at least 33 countries, including Britain. Dr. Hans Kluge, the World Health Organization’s regional director for Europe, called the spread of the variant across the continent “an alarming situation.”

“Without increased control to slow its spread, there will be an increased impact on already stressed and pressurized health facilities,” [Dr. Kluge said at a briefing on Thursday](#), warning that the variant may, over time, “replace other circulating lineages” as it has in Britain.

Dr. Kluge urged countries to continue to investigate transmission, increase genetic sequencing and to share data.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Capitol Police chief resigns
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/us/Capitol-cops-police.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>Six days before a raucous rally of President Trump’s supporters in Washington, Representative Maxine Waters anxiously grilled the chief of the Capitol Police about his preparations for various scenarios: Were the rooftops secured? Would streets be blocked off? Did he know that violent groups like the Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers were vowing to stir up chaos?</p> <p>Ms. Waters, a California Democrat, said each of her concerns was met with a similar response from Chief Steven Sund during their hourlong call: “He assured me that they have everything under control, that they were on top of everything.”</p> <p>They weren’t. Instead an angry mob of pro-Trump extremists swarmed the barricades around the Capitol on Wednesday, spraying chemical irritants and wielding lead pipes, injuring more than 50 officers. They battered doors, broke windows and scaled the walls, rampaging through the building as congressional leaders made desperate calls for help.</p>

The Capitol Police seemed to offer little resistance and arrested only 14 people, making it much more difficult to find and charge the rioters, according to a law enforcement official involved in coordinating the response.

Chief Sund, who took over the 2,000-member Capitol Police force two years ago and whose biography lists him as [an expert in “critical incident management.”](#) handed in his resignation on Thursday after pressure from congressional leaders. [The sergeants-at-arms of the House and Senate resigned, too.](#)

Trump loyalists clashed with law enforcement personnel on the west side of the Capitol building. Credit President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr., who spent 36 years in the Senate, criticized the stark contrast between the militarized and sometimes violent phalanxes deployed against protesters of racial injustice over the summer and the outnumbered officers who cringed and retreated from — or [posed for a selfie with](#) — the mostly white pro-Trump mob.

“No one can tell me that if it had been a group of Black Lives Matter protesting yesterday, they wouldn’t have been treated very, very differently than the mob of thugs that stormed the Capitol,” Mr. Biden said in a video statement. “We all know that’s true, and it is unacceptable.”

Policing experts noted the absence of crowd-control tools such as mounted officers, police dogs or a heavily manned perimeter.

Pentagon officials said Thursday that the Capitol Police had turned down an offer for additional National Guard troops before Wednesday’s storming of the Capitol, and two law enforcement officials said they had initially rebuffed help from the F.B.I. as the mob descended.

“How they were not ready for this today, I have no idea,” said Charles Ramsey, a former D.C. police chief. “They were overwhelmed; they did not have the resources. You have to be able to protect the Capitol.”

But others in law enforcement insisted that the president’s encouragement of the mob could not have been anticipated.

“No one expected the president to say, ‘Hey guys, let’s all go down to the Capitol and show them who’s boss,’” said Jose Cervino, who worked for the department for 14 years and helped plan security for large events and protests. “That is a completely different thing that no one’s ever planned or prepared for. How could you?”

Mr. Cervino defended the hesitancy to use weapons, saying the department’s primary mandate was to protect the lawmakers, not the building.

“We have the members and we have the leadership secured. Is it correct to start shooting people?” Mr. Cervino asked. “I can’t imagine that I would be happier today if we found out we kept the crowd out, but wound up shooting 40 people.”

Theortis Jones, a Black officer whose career stretched from the Nixon inauguration to Barack Obama’s, said the agency had consistently overreacted to events with Black participants. He recalled that when Louis Farrakhan, the Nation of Islam leader, visited the Capitol with a handful of associates, all officers were required to stay at their posts and a SWAT team was stationed in the garage. “I thought that was an insult to every Black officer on the force,” he said.

In 2001, more than 250 officers [filed a suit](#) against the Capitol Police Department, claiming discrimination was rampant in the ranks and that, at the time, Black and minority officers were severely underrepresented in the ranks. The initial breach of the barricades began before 1 p.m. and was followed by hours of chaos in which rioters looted, vandalized and livestreamed. Gov. Larry Hogan of Maryland received a frantic call from the House majority leader, Steny Hoyer, who told him that “the U.S. Capitol Police was overwhelmed, that there was no federal law enforcement presence.”

“The leaders of Congress were pleading with me as the governor of Maryland for assistance,” Governor Hogan said. He said though he wanted to authorize the mobilization of the Maryland National Guard, “We were repeatedly denied approval to do so,” leading to a 90-minute delay, he said.

The breakdowns in coordination began long before Jan. 6. The departure of William P. Barr from his post as attorney general in mid-December left the Justice Department with a leadership vacuum and wary of the president, who was pressuring the department to investigate supposed voter fraud, according to a law enforcement official involved in coordinating the response. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the meetings or the investigations.

Mayor Muriel Bowser of the District of Columbia, unhappy about heavy-handed federal treatment of protesters, argued for the Metropolitan Police Department to take the lead, law enforcement officials said. She warned residents and counterprotesters to stay home.

But the Capitol Police have exclusive jurisdiction at the Capitol and its grounds.

Michael Chertoff, a Homeland Security secretary in the George W. Bush administration, questioned why Wednesday’s rallies were not designated a National Special Security Event, which would have allowed the Secret Service to take the lead on the response.

The Capitol Police did not request assistance from the Homeland Security Department until 2:30 p.m., according to officials.

“The failure was the Capitol Police. They would have to be the requesting agency. But they were late in doing it,” Mr. Chertoff said. “It wasn’t a surprise attack, all you had to do was read the newspaper and see that the president was telling people to go wild. A 5-year-old would know this would be a center of focus here.”

Though pro-Trump extremists chattered openly online about seizing the Capitol, and posted photos of their weapons, the federal government did not issue bulletins outlining that threat to “fusion centers” that were created to keep state and local law enforcement informed, said Mike Sena, the president of the National Fusion Center Association.

Chase Jennings, a spokesman for the Homeland Security Department, said the agency “had open channels with partners and shared information on those channels.”

But Representative Tim Ryan of Ohio, who runs the House Appropriations subcommittee that oversees the budget for the Capitol Police, said none of the intelligence presented in the planning meetings leading up to Wednesday suggested that the Capitol might be stormed.

“We are going to do a deep dive to figure out exactly what happened from the intelligence side and from the threat assessment side,” Mr. Ryan said. “We did not have enough manpower there to hold the line.”

It took more than two hours to restore order. One woman, identified as Ashli Babbitt, was fatally shot by a Capitol Police officer, according to Robert J. Contee III, chief of the city’s Metropolitan Police Department, which was among the agencies called in for backup. Another woman and two men died during the events because of medical emergencies, he said.

The Metropolitan Police had arrested 69 adults and one minor by early Thursday morning, mostly for violating the city’s 6 p.m. curfew and unlawful entry. Four men ranging in age from 25 to 40 were charged with carrying handguns without permits. Only one of the 70 people arrested was a D.C. resident, according to documents released by the department.

The Capitol Police made 14 arrests, including one of a 70-year-old man from Alabama they said had a gun and materials to make several Molotov cocktails. The F.B.I. asked the public to [call its hotline](#) with any tips about the rioters.

	<p>Critics noted that Mr. Trump repeatedly lashed out at racial justice protesters but reacted to the mob on Wednesday with tenderness. After George Floyd's death, he called demonstrators "thugs" and promised that those who got out of line would be met with "the most vicious dogs, and most ominous weapons, I have ever seen."</p> <p>Federal law enforcement officers swept people into unmarked vans and used pepper spray to clear peaceful protesters so that Mr. Trump could pose for photos in front of a church. "When the looting starts, the shooting starts," he wrote.</p> <p>But he was far kinder to those who stormed the Capitol. Hours after the riot began, he finally posted a video saying, "You have to go home now." He added, "We love you. You're very special."</p> <p>Shenita Binns, 42, a federal employee who has taken part in numerous racial justice protests in Washington and around the country, said she was struck by the deference given to the mob on Wednesday. Usually protesters cannot get anywhere near the Capitol steps.</p> <p>At a demonstration in June, some participants tried to talk to police officers. "They stood there like statues and did not say anything back except stuff like 'Don't come up here' or 'Don't go that way,'" she said. "If anybody tried to get past them they were pushed back down."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Experts warn against UK vaccine strategy
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/experts-warn-uks-planned-vaccination-strategy/story?id=75117679
GIST	<p>The U.K. plans to postpone giving the required second dose of their authorized vaccines by up to 12 weeks -- an attempt to hasten distribution of the first dose. This public experiment is highly controversial as the vaccines' second doses were authorized to be given three to four weeks after the first, per the clinical trials.</p> <p>"Bad idea," said Dr. Paul Offit, a member of the Food and Drug Administration's Vaccine Advisory Committee. "You're disrupting a program," he said, adding if a recipient's second dose is delayed "two months later, three months later, four months later ... they may not be protected anymore."</p> <p>COVID-19 vaccine injections have lagged globally, with the U.S. having only inoculated over 5 million of the approximate 20 million vaccines distributed around the country. With the new virus variant running rampant in the U.K., causing its second official shutdown, their health officials are grasping to gain the upper hand.</p> <p>"It's all we're seeing really, day in and day out -- more and more cases of this," said Dr. Laith Alexander of St. Thomas' Hospital in the U.K. Alexander received his first injection last month, and said he did not agree to have his second shot delayed.</p> <p>"The problem is I consented to the vaccination as per the schedule that was tested in the trial -- in the phase three trial," said Alexander. "I didn't really consent to a schedule that ultimately doesn't have a randomized clinical trial behind it."</p> <p>The authorized vaccines in the U.K. -- including those from Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Moderna -- each require two doses. Each vaccine has some data showing that the vaccine could be moderately effective after the first shot, but not nearly as much as they would be without the second required dose.</p> <p>"With the Pfizer [first dose], it was about 50% effective or so within that three-week period of time," Offit told ABC News regarding the data from the vaccine clinical trials. "For the Moderna [first dose], about 80% within the four-week period of time -- but all that shows is that you have a very, very short range of protection with that first dose, which may only be a few weeks."</p>

Offit is a part of the advisory committee that voted for the FDA to authorize both Pfizer's and Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine candidates for emergency use in the United States.

"That second dose gives you an excellent boost response as was shown in the clinical trials," said Offit. "It's making a mistake to just delay the second dose because it sends a subtle message that the second dose perhaps isn't so important -- whereas it's critically important because that is what gives you the protection, and likely longer-term protection, you need from these vaccines."

The World Health Organization also weighed in on the U.K.'s plan, saying scientific evidence does not support a delay of more than six weeks in administering a second vaccine dose.

Offit said there is no support among researchers at the FDA to delay second doses in the U.S. One option being discussed, however, is administering just half the volume of the Moderna vaccine when giving each dose, which is based on early results in 18- to 55-year-olds.

The idea was posed by Moncef Slaoui, the head of Operation Warp Speed, in an interview with CBS' "Face the Nation" earlier this week.

"That makes even less sense than giving one dose and waiting," Offit said when asked about Slaoui's proposal. "I think it's a dangerous, dangerous idea. And certainly the Food and Drug Administration has squelched both the ideas."

When asked to comment, Moderna said, "At this point we wouldn't have any further information to share about any potential ongoing regulatory discussions."

On Monday, the FDA issued a warning against any experimenting with dosing. "We want to remind the public about the importance of receiving COVID-19 vaccines according to how they've been authorized ... in order to safely receive the level of protection observed in the randomized clinical trials," read the statement.

Injections in the U.S. continue to be slower than officials originally promised, but Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said the U.S. may soon be able to vaccinate a million people per day.

Eyes remain on the ongoing clinical trials for Johnson and Johnson's single-dose vaccine candidate. If the company proves to the FDA its vaccine is safe and effective, injections could be expedited starting as soon as February with up to 100 million doses distributed in the U.S., according to the company.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Calif. hospitals preparing grim choices
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/california-hospitals-prepping-grim-covid-19-choices-75104967
GIST	<p>SACRAMENTO, Calif. -- California Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration and the state's hospital association are at odds over how best to create space for critically ill coronavirus patients at already strained medical facilities that soon could be overwhelmed by the expected surge of new cases from holiday gatherings.</p> <p>A surge following Halloween and Thanksgiving produced record hospitalizations and now the most seriously ill of those patients are dying in unprecedented numbers. California health authorities reported Thursday 583 new deaths and a record two-day total of 1,042.</p> <p>The state has deployed 88 refrigerated trailers, up from 60 a few weeks ago, for use as makeshift morgues, mostly in hard-hit Southern California.</p>

Hospitalizations are nearing 22,000 and state models project the number could reach 30,000 by Feb 1. Already, many hospitals in Los Angeles and other hard-hit areas are struggling to keep up and warned they may need to ration care as intensive care beds dwindle.

Earlier this week, state health officials caught hospitals off guard and left them scrambling with new orders limiting nonessential surgeries and requiring hospitals that have scarce ICU space to accept patients from those that have run out, an order that may require transferring patients hundreds of miles.

The California Hospital Association said the orders don't go far enough to address a crisis that "cannot be overstated." It wants changes including reducing paperwork that it says is sapping hours daily from nurses who would otherwise be treating patients.

Carmela Coyle, the association's president and chief executive, said the group has been negotiating with state officials but they aren't acting fast enough.

"We really need to move quickly to coordinate and see if we can eliminate the burden on the health care delivery system — focus on nothing other than saving lives for the next few weeks," she said.

State epidemiologist Dr. Erica Pan responded Thursday that the administration is "committed to continuing to closely coordinate and partner with hospitals and local leaders." She said state officials "appreciate any suggestions from those on the ground fighting this pandemic every day."

Meantime, seeking to keep people closer to home, the Newsom administration issued a more strident travel advisory that says out-of-state residents are "strongly discouraged" from entering California, and Californians should avoid nonessential travel more than 120 miles (193 kilometers) from home.

The state's advisory in November encouraged people to stay home or within their region without giving a specific number of miles. It outlined quarantine guidelines for out-of-state travelers but did not explicitly discourage travel.

Dr. Rajiv Bhatia, an affiliated assistant professor of medicine at Stanford University and a former director in the San Francisco Department of Public Health, questioned the effectiveness of a distance requirement, noting it will be difficult to enforce and people may tune out yet another piece of state guidance. He said California, broadly, hasn't provided adequate data to back up restrictions.

"They simply don't want to give anybody any opportunity to interact," he said.

People traveling more than 120 miles are more likely to be accessing commercial services like hotels, said a spokesperson for the California Department of Public Health, noting the distance is designed to be fair for rural and urban residents.

Coyle said the orders affecting hospitals that were issued Tuesday don't provide the help that hospitals desperately need.

Most hospitals affected by the nonessential surgeries order already canceled the sort of procedures barred by the state, like non-urgent spinal or carpal tunnel release surgeries, she said. It applies only to hospitals in 14 of 58 counties, all in Southern California and the agricultural San Joaquin Valley, two regions that have the most pronounced ICU bed shortage.

Coyle said it's also unclear how often the transfer order will be used. While it could mean sending patients hundreds of miles to Northern California by ambulance, life flight helicopters or other aircraft, it's more likely to ease transfers between nearby counties, she said.

During an earlier surge, patients in Imperial County along the border with Mexico were sent to hospitals as far as the San Francisco Bay Area. But the current outbreak is so widespread that only 11 mostly rural counties north of Sacramento and San Francisco are above the state's threshold of having at least 15%

	<p>capacity for coronavirus patients in ICU beds. Those below that level are under stricter restrictions for businesses.</p> <p>UC Davis Health, which has the major trauma center in the Sacramento area, said it hasn't received any transfer requests. A spokesman there and for the Sutter Health system both referred questions to the hospital association, while Kaiser Permanente did not immediately comment.</p> <p>"If we can get patients in the right setting to begin with, it will minimize the need to have to transfer patients after the fact, and that's just quite frankly better for patient care," Coyle said.</p> <p>That means California should start coordinating patient care at the state level where officials can see the big picture on best-equipped hospitals at any given moment, instead of allowing local dispatchers to follow the usual practice of sending ambulances to the nearest facility, she said.</p> <p>"Yes, transferring patients is important but we have a number of big issues that need to be worked through," she said. That includes temporarily suspending regulations that she said can tie up nurses on paperwork for hours and make it difficult to use a team approach to providing intensive care when hospitals lack sufficient critical-care-trained nurses.</p> <p>California Nurses Association government relations director Stephanie Roberson said team nursing is a cost-cutting move that would undermine patient care after hospitals failed to properly prepare for the surge.</p> <p>"It's a slap in the face to safe patient care to actually call charting and documentation 'red tape,'" she said.</p> <p>Pan said the state's moves "will save lives" as officials look to get hospitals staff and resources.</p> <p>State health officials did not respond to questions on how they expect the health orders to be applied or how many patients or hospitals might be affected.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 China city offers vaccine snitch reward
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/latest-japan-declares-state-emergency-tokyo-area-75106449
GIST	<p>BEIJING — A city in northern China is offering rewards of 500 yuan (\$77) for anyone who reports on a resident who has not taken a coronavirus test.</p> <p>The offer from the government of Nangong comes as millions in the city and the surrounding province of Hebei are being tested as part of efforts to control China's most serious recent outbreak of infections.</p> <p>The offering of rewards for information on political or social nonconformists has a long history in China.</p> <p>China has largely controlled local transmission of the virus through the use of measures considered by some to be extreme and highly intrusive, including lockdowns of entire cities, close electronic monitoring of people's movements and bans on traveling to and from parts of the country.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Calif. bypasses tough nurse care rules
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/california-bypasses-tough-nurse-care-rules-amid-covid-75125939

GIST

SAN FRANCISCO -- Nerissa Black was already having a hard time tending to four COVID-19 patients who need constant heart monitoring. But because of staffing shortages affecting hospitals throughout California, her workload recently increased to six people infected with the coronavirus.

Black, a registered nurse at the telemetry cardiac unit of the Henry Mayo Hospital in Valencia, just north of Los Angeles, barely has time to take a break or eat a meal. But what really worries her is not having enough time to spend with each of her patients.

Black said she rarely has time to help patients brush their teeth or go to the bathroom because she must prioritize making sure they get the medicine they need and don't develop bedsores.

"We have had more patients falling (in December) compared to last year because we don't have enough staff to take care of everybody," Black said.

Overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients in the nation's most populous state, Black and many other nurses already stretched thin are now caring for more patients than typically allowed under state law after the state began issuing waivers that allow hospitals to temporarily bypass a strict nurse-to-patient ratios law — a move they say is pushing them to the brink of burnout and affecting patient care.

California is the only state in the country to require by law specific number of nurses to patients in every hospital unit. It requires hospitals to provide one nurse for every two patients in intensive care and one nurse for every four patients in emergency rooms, for example. Those ratios, nurses say, have helped reduce errors and protect the safety of patients and nurses.

Nurses overwhelmed with patients because of the pandemic in other states are demanding law-mandated ratios. But so far, they have failed to get them. In Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and New York, the country's first pandemic hotspot, nurses have been demanding state-mandated minimum staffing standards for months. Voters in Massachusetts rejected in 2018 mandated nurse-to-patient ratios.

In the 10 minutes Black gets with each person every hour, she has to look at lab work reports, imaging reports, communicate any abnormalities to the doctor, document her interventions, coordinate with case workers, and in many cases, arrange for the hospital's chaplain, she said.

"It's very busy, the nurses and not just the nurses but the assistants, we are all exhausted. Morale is pretty low," she said.

Gov. Gavin Newsom's Department of Public Health began issuing temporary waivers of the law for a second time in December after another surge left hospitals in Southern California and the agricultural San Joaquin Valley with what is considered no intensive care capacity because of a lack of staffing. The department had ordered all non-urgent and elective surgeries and issued a blanket 90-day waiver of the patient ratio last spring.

So far, at least 250 of California's about 400 hospitals have been granted 60-day waivers that allow for ICU nurses to care for three people and emergency room nurses to oversee six patients. The waivers only apply to intensive care, observation units, cardiac monitoring, emergency and surgical care units. But Newsom so far has not canceled elective surgeries during the recent surge.

Kaiser Permanente, which has 36 hospitals in California, applied for waivers at 15 of them to plan for surge needs, spokesman Marc Brown said. He said the health care giant avoided asking for more waivers by canceling elective and non-urgent surgeries, paying nurses overtime and working with the nurses to move their shifts and locations.

"We take the existing ratios seriously," Brown said.

California Hospital Association spokeswoman Jan Emerson-Shea said hospitals are applying for the waivers only after they have no other choice left to care for the patients they have.

“We are literally in the worst crisis of this pandemic so far and are seeing caseloads that we have not seen to date,” Emerson-Shea said, adding that hospitals are just trying to get through the crisis. “No one wants to have our staff emotionally and physically exhausted. But we have no choice. People need care.”

California hospitals typically turn to staffing agencies and travel nurses during the winter season, when hospitalizations surge and medical staff get sick because of the flu. But California is now among states nationwide vying for medical personnel, particularly trained ICU nurses.

Stephanie Roberson, the California Nurses Association government relations director, criticized hospitals for not preparing better by training registered nurses and failing to hire more staff — including traveling nurses — during a fall lull in COVID-19 cases, despite an expected fall surge in hospitalizations.

“In some of our hospital systems, if they were lucky to have travelers, they shooed the travelers away because they told the travelers they weren’t in crisis mode and those travelers went elsewhere because they had better gigs somewhere else,” Roberson said.

Black, who has been a nurse for 10 years, said she has been relying on her husband to take care of her family needs so she can rest and sleep as much as possible on her days off. She has also been seeing a therapist to cope with the stress from work.

She said she is doing everything she can to take care of herself because she is committed to helping her patients. But she calls her working conditions increasingly unsafe.

“A lot of people say we signed up for this and no, we didn’t. I signed up to help take care of people, not to throw myself into the fire,” Black said.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Brazil deaths rise amid holiday fun in sun
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/brazils-pandemic-deaths-top-200000-amid-return-fun-75125610
GIST	<p>SAO PAULO -- The night before New Year’s Eve in Rio de Janeiro, thousands of revelers clad in their bathing suits crowded onto the iconic Ipanema beach to have some seaside drinks. It was one of many open-air parties occurring along Brazil’s vast coastline since the summer heat set in, and as the COVID-19 death toll climbed higher.</p> <p>“It was so packed, you couldn’t set foot on the beach,” said a maintenance worker at a luxury apartment building across the street. “And it wasn’t just at night; the beach was packed during the day, too. And no one wears a mask!” he added, insisting on not being quoted by name out of worry the building’s owner would punish him for speaking to a reporter.</p> <p>The explosion of celebrations came just ahead of a pandemic milestone: Brazil passed 200,000 deaths Thursday, rising 1,524 in the previous 24 hours to a total of 200,498 for the pandemic, according to data released by Brazil’s health ministry. It has the world’s second highest death toll, behind the United States, according to Johns Hopkins University’s database.</p> <p>Many Brazilians have been straining against quarantine for months, going to bars or small gatherings with friends, but massive blowouts had been few and far between since the pandemic began. Festivities kicked off after the Southern Hemisphere’s summer started on Dec. 21.</p> <p>While many countries imposed new restrictions to limit the spread of the virus in mid-December, the administration of Brazil’s President Jair Bolsonaro gave its blessing for holiday fun in the sun. Tourism Minister Gilson Machado told radio station Jovem Pan that gatherings of up to 300 people were perfectly</p>

acceptable. The decision to impose restrictions is the prerogative of local governments; some that did so saw their rules ignored.

A prominent YouTuber organized a party near a river beach for hundreds of people in Alagoas state, in the country's northeast region. Days later, local media reported that 47 people, among unmasked guests and staffers contracted COVID-19. At least two were admitted to intensive-care units.

A five-day New Year's bash drew 150 people near the property owned by soccer star Neymar outside Rio, although he denied any association with the VIP event.

Outside Sao Paulo, Bolsonaro kicked off 2021 by jumping off a boat and swimming towards a throng of unmasked, cheering supporters.

And cops in the city of Bertioga on Sao Paulo's coast used tear gas to disperse a celebration in the early hours New Year's Day.

"Right before the parties, the situation was already getting bad. But this week or next, it will get even worse," Domingos Alves, an adjunct professor of social medicine at the University of Sao Paulo, told The Associated Press this week.

Alves, who leads a team of researchers tracking COVID-19 data, warned that several states' daily confirmed cases have already surpassed the numbers seen during Brazil's peak in July.

Intensive-care units in many cities are once again slammed with COVID-19 patients. The mayor of Amazonas state's capital Manaus — which one local study speculated may have reached herd immunity after its brutal first wave — declared a 180-day state of emergency Tuesday and suspended all permits for events. State authorities prohibited all nonessential activities for 15 days in most of the city

The city of 2.2 million has recorded 3,550 deaths since the start of the pandemic, and the number of COVID-19 burials has surged. Outside at least one graveyard, cars lined up filled with people waiting to bury their loved ones.

Vanda Ortega, a volunteer nurse in Manaus' Community of Indigenous Nations, told the AP the city had adopted a hands-off approach toward the virus, first during November local elections with large rallies and long lines of voters.

"Then we had the holiday season, with a lot of secret parties," said Ortega, who belongs to the Witoto ethnicity. "We live in an area where rich people have cabins. They have parties every week."

Many mayors on Sao Paulo's shore ignored holiday restrictions their governor imposed. In at least 12 cities, mayors kept stores, hotels and beaches open to tourists.

Images of traffic jams and packed beaches, with crowds largely unmasked, were so jarring that European Union commissioner Paolo Gentiloni expressed his disbelief on Twitter, saying "I saw shameful images from Brazil."

Bolsonaro, who despite becoming ill from the virus himself, has consistently argued that the country faces a greater risk from the economic damage of lockdowns than from the pandemic. He signaled with his New Year's swim that he will continue to ignore protective measures observed in most countries.

"I dived in with a mask on so I wouldn't catch COVID from the little fish," he joked a few days later outside the presidential palace.

After Brazil surpassed the 200,000 deaths mark, Bolsonaro said in a live broadcast in his social media channels Thursday that he is sorry for those two who were lost, "but life goes on."

	<p>“There’s no use in keeping that old story of staying home and the economy we will see later,” the Brazilian president said. “That won’t work, it will be chaos in Brazil. It could lead to even more dramatic consequences than those of the virus.”</p> <p>Even some Brazilians who consider themselves cautious are letting down their guards. Soccer fan Ricardo Santos, 46, says he covers his face each time he goes out, carries hand sanitizer in his bag and observes social distancing. But on Wednesday, he and a dozen of other Palmeiras fans hit a bar in downtown Sao Paulo to watch their team play.</p> <p>“I spent New Year’s with only two friends who live in the same building. I take precautions. But sometimes you have to accept a little risk to preserve your mental health, too,” Santos said.</p> <p>Back on Rio’s Ipanema beach, Joao Batista Baria, 57, said he blamed authorities for not protecting its poorest residents.</p> <p>“Everyone is talking about these beach parties, but crowding also happens on the bus, on the subway,” Baria said while cleaning the foldable chairs tourists and residents rent to soak up the summer sun. “People come to the beach because they choose to. I need to take the bus to get to work.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 NKorea vows improved ties to world
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/kim-vows-improve-ties-world-party-meeting-75122465
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea -- North Korean leader Kim Jong Un stressed the need to drastically improve his nation’s ties with the outside world as he addressed a major political conference for the third day.</p> <p>State media said Kim also reviewed relations with rival South Korea but didn’t explain what steps he said he wanted to take. Observers have expected Kim to use the first congress of the ruling Workers’ Party in five years to send conciliatory gestures toward Seoul and Washington as he faces deepening economic troubles at home.</p> <p>In his speech on the third day of the meeting Thursday, Kim “declared the general orientation and the policy stand of our party for comprehensively expanding and developing the external relations,” the Korean Central News Agency said Friday.</p> <p>Kim also examined relations with South Korea “as required by the prevailing situation and the changed times,” KCNA said.</p> <p>The congress is the party’s top decision-making body that reviews past projects, lays out new priorities and reshuffles top officials. It was convened as Kim struggles to overcome what he calls “multiple crises” caused by an economy battered by pandemic-related border closings, a series of natural disasters and U.S.-led economic sanctions.</p> <p>In his opening-day speech, Kim admitted his previous economic plans had failed and vowed to adopt a new five-year development plan. On the second day of the meeting, he said he would bolster his country’s military capability.</p> <p>Kim, who inherited power upon his father Kim Jong Il’s death in late 2011, turned 37 on Friday. His birthday hasn’t yet been designated a national holiday like his father’s and grandfather’s. KCNA said the congress would continue, suggesting it was having a fourth-day session on Kim’s birthday.</p> <p>After a provocative run of weapons tests in 2016-17 to acquire the ability to strike the U.S. mainland with nuclear weapons, Kim abruptly launched high-stakes nuclear diplomacy with President Donald Trump, which awarded him long-desired legitimacy on the world stage. He also met Chinese, Russian, South</p>

Korean and other world leaders. But as his diplomacy with Trump stalled and the coronavirus forced him to close his country's borders, Kim has been focusing domestically to mitigate the economic shocks from the pandemic.

During Thursday's session, Kim also called for "thoroughly eliminating non-socialist elements" in North Korean society and proposed ways to promote the "might of the social system of our state," KCNA said. Kim criticized working people's organizations including the youth league for allegedly failing to fulfill their duties and said the league must prioritize "ideological education" above other tasks, it said.

Kim's government has been cracking down on what it calls "alien, unsound non-socialist practices." Last month, state media said North Korea's parliament legislated "a law on rejecting reactionary ideology and culture." Analysts say North Korea is guarding against a possible spread of capitalism and looser internal unity amid the economic difficulties.

South Korea's spy agency said Kim is worrying about U.S. President-elect Joe Biden, who is to take office on Jan. 20. Biden has called Kim a "thug" and is unlikely to hold any direct meetings with him unless North Korea takes serious steps toward denuclearization. The Kim-Trump diplomacy broke down during a summit in Vietnam in early 2019 after Trump rejected Kim's offer to dismantle his main nuclear complex, a limited disarmament step, in return for broad sanctions relief.

Ties between the Koreas once flourished after Kim entered talks with Trump. But North Korea has halted exchanges with the South and resumed harsh rhetoric against it since the breakdown of the Kim-Trump summit in Vietnam.

Some observers say North Korea is frustrated because the South has failed to break away from Washington and revive stalled joint economic projects held back by the U.S.-led sanctions. They also speculate that North Korea initially thought South Korea would help it win sanctions relief but got upset after Kim returned home empty-handed from the 2019 summit with Trump.

The observers say North Korea may reach out to South Korea first to promote a mood of reconciliation before pushing for talks with the Biden administration. The nuclear diplomacy between Kim and Trump began after South Korean officials met Kim in early 2018 and conveyed to Washington his reported willingness to deal away his nuclear program in exchange for economic and political benefits.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Outrage in Capitol policing failures
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/lawmakers-demand-answers-outrage-explodes-us-capitol-policing/story?id=75120929
GIST	<p>Lawmakers from both parties Thursday said outrage over the massive security breach at the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday has only grown, and they pledged to determine why the U.S. Capitol Police force was so ill-prepared for the rioters who stormed the complex.</p> <p>"I'm livid about the whole thing," Rep. Tim Ryan, D-Ohio, who is leading the House Appropriations Committee investigation into the episode, told reporters. "We were told no one was going to be anywhere close to the Capitol, and the protests. And next thing you know, you turn on the TV, and they're swinging from the Capitol building with flags."</p> <p>Resignations from senior police officials came swiftly -- including the resignations Thursday of U.S. Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund, House Sergeant-at-Arms Paul Irving and Senate Sergeant-at-Arms Michael Stenger.</p> <p>But the departures do not answer painful questions about why Capitol security was so easily overwhelmed, why the Capitol Police failed to request sufficient reinforcements from the D.C. Police and the National</p>

Guard, and why some officers appeared to be appeasing the extremist interlopers -- with at least one officer allowing a rioter to snap him in a selfie -- lawmakers said.

Asked about the disparity between how police responded Wednesday compared to the massive militarized force used during peaceful Black Lives Matter protests over the summer, Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., said that was a significant concern.

"This was a group of almost entirely white protesters -- rioters, really, not protesters," she said. "The treatment of them was quite different than had this been a group that was more diverse. So that's a real issue."

In a statement issued before the announcement of his resignation, Sund said that police "had a robust plan established to address anticipated First Amendment activities," but that the violent attack was "unlike any I have ever experienced in my 30 years in law enforcement." The statement appeared to suggest the massive size of the assault was not anticipated.

Multiple lawmakers, however, told ABC News that they had raised security concerns in advance of the Jan. 6 joint session of Congress, and they said Sund repeatedly reassured them that the complex would be heavily fortified.

U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters said she spent an hour on the phone with Sund several days before the session, and specifically raised concerns about the potential for violence from the extremists being urged to protest by President Donald Trump. She said Sund promised her the police were ready.

"I thought, he's the police chief. I guess he knows what he's doing," Waters told ABC News. "He's telling me that they are very comfortable and they have it under control. That the Capitol is going to be secured."

Anger over the unprecedented breach spanned the congressional ranks. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell called the riot a "massive failure" of the institutions, protocols and planning that are supposed to protect the legislative branch of the federal government.

"A painstaking investigation and thorough review must now take place and significant changes must follow," McConnell said in a statement. "Initial bipartisan discussions have already begun among committees of oversight and congressional leadership."

Dismay about the way events unfolded was shared by the officers who had limited resources and reinforcements when they were confronted by an overwhelming mob. One source familiar with the Capitol Police's security preparations expressed frustration that, even though law enforcement and security officials suspected for days that protesters might try to break into the Capitol, leadership did not request enough assistance from the local Metropolitan Police Department or other law enforcement agencies to defend against such an effort.

Capitol Police Union Chairman Gus Papathanasiou released a statement Thursday saying officers are "frustrated and demoralized by the lack of leadership" that resulted in the storming of the Capitol.

"We have several protesters dead, multiple officers injured and the symbol of our democracy, the U.S. Capitol, desecrated. This never should have happened," Papathanasiou said in the statement.

Ryan said lawmakers will consult the military and law enforcement agencies involved to perform a "minute-by-minute" review of what went wrong -- and that hearings are expected soon.

"We're never going to look at the Capitol the same way, just like after 9/11, we never looked at terrorism the same way," Ryan said.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Arizona 'hottest hot spot' for Covid-19
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/arizona-hottest-hot-spot-covid-19-health-officials/story?id=75062175
GIST	<p>Arizona has become "the hottest hot spot" for COVID-19, as the state experiences the highest case rates in the world and record hospitalizations -- and health officials warn the numbers are only going to get worse due to holiday gatherings.</p> <p>Arizona reported 9,909 new COVID-19 cases and 297 new deaths on Thursday, the highest single-day tally yet, though the state health department noted most were due to the "death certificate matching process."</p> <p>Arizona has the worst rates of COVID-19 cases globally, according to 91-divoc.com, a COVID-19 tracker. The state currently has the highest seven-day average of COVID-19 infections per capita of any region in the world, based on Johns Hopkins University data.</p> <p>Arizona also leads the country in hospitalization rates, according to The COVID Tracking Project. There were 4,920 hospitalizations reported Thursday -- the highest number for the fourth straight day.</p> <p>Staffing concerns</p> <p>Statewide, 7% of intensive care unit beds were available as of Wednesday, according to data from the Arizona Department of Health Services.</p> <p>Banner Health cares for roughly half of all COVID-19 patients in Arizona, officials said. The situation in the state is "beyond concerning," Dr. Marjorie Bessel, chief clinical officer for the hospital system, said during a press briefing Wednesday.</p> <p>"Hospitals in the state of Arizona are stretched very thin right now despite a considerable amount of preparation and work to increase capacity," Bessel said.</p> <p>Banner Health canceled elective surgeries at all of its Arizona hospitals on Jan. 1. Its occupancy in Arizona is above 100% of its licensed bed capacity, Bessel said Wednesday, though staffing is the system's greatest concern.</p> <p>"We can create beds, we believe," she said. "It's the skilled staff, that expert nurse, that wonderful doctor, that incredibly diligent respiratory therapist, those are the individuals that are stretched really thin right now. And there's just not that many more of them in the entire country because they are deployed in each and every state trying to meet the demands of every community."</p> <p>Bessel anticipates hospitalizations will only get worse in the coming weeks due to the "stacking effect of Thanksgiving activities, Christmastime activities and New Year's Eve."</p> <p>Wait times are another concern, as hospitals may have to hold patients in emergency rooms because there are no available staffed ICU or inpatient beds.</p> <p>"The wait may be anywhere from a few hours to upwards of 24 to 48 hours in the emergency department until we're able to move somebody from the emergency department up into a hospital bed," Dr. Michael White, chief clinical officer for Valleywise Health in Maricopa County, said during a press briefing Wednesday.</p> <p>Calls for mitigation -- and enforcement</p> <p>As Arizona has become the "hottest hot spot for COVID," Bessel is urging residents to "shrink your circle" to just those in their household, wear a mask with people outside their circle and "stop attending unmasked gatherings even if you feel well."</p> <p>"It is very likely that someone at those gatherings has the virus, and they are spreading it to you," she said, noting that contact tracing is not beneficial because COVID-19 "is so uncontrolled in our state."</p>

"We need every one of you to do your part so that hospitals can remain open and accessible for all those in need of health care," she added.

The health official also called for increased mitigation measures, such as a statewide mask mandate, curfew and halting indoor dining, and enforcement of existing measures.

The state has not issued a mask mandate, though several cities and counties have. Citations for disregarding mask orders have not been issued in Tucson, Flagstaff or the Phoenix area's 12 largest cities, according to a [recent investigation](#) by the Arizona Republic.

Gov. Doug Ducey has also called on local governments to enforce measures.

"There are steps in place, and if many of these leaders that are reaching out and asking for additional actions would actually enforce and have accountability around the steps that are already there, we can further reduce the spread of this and save lives," Ducey said last month at a press briefing.

In a Jan. 3 report obtained by ABC News, the White House Coronavirus Task Force said that Arizona's post-holiday numbers "raise significant concerns" regarding community spread of COVID-19, and recommended a "combination of aggressive mitigation with further restrictions and substantial acceleration of vaccinations."

The Republican governor has not tightened restrictions despite calls to do so.

"Faced with strict mitigation measures in place and states that have few or minimal mitigation measures in place all are experiencing the same thing," Ducey spokesperson C.J. Karamargin [told the Associated Press](#) this week. "The mitigation measures the state of Arizona put into place early on -- they remain in place. We urge every Arizonan to follow them."

Focus on vaccinations

The state has been prioritizing vaccination to combat the pandemic.

"The vaccine will save millions of lives going forward, and that is our focus today," Ducey said last month.

More than 113,00 people as of Thursday, including frontline medical workers and residents and staff at nursing facilities, have been vaccinated in Arizona, according to the state health department.

The goal is to get some 3.5 million people vaccinated, officials said.

Staffing is a concern at vaccination sites, Bessel said. Banner Health is operating three vaccination sites throughout the state, requiring hundreds of staff and volunteers each day. Bessel herself has been redeployed to Banner Health's vaccination pod at the Arizona State Fairgrounds several times to administer vaccines, a spokesperson told ABC News.

"We are stretching ourselves as much as possible because we do believe that [the] vaccine is the way that we get out of the pandemic," she said.

Volunteers trained by the Arizona National Guard started administering the COVID-19 vaccine on Wednesday and supporting vaccination sites in Arizona, officials said. They include retired medical professionals and people with a medical background.

"When people saw us out here, they wanted to step up and volunteer, which is exactly what we need," U.S. Army Col. Tom Leaper, the Arizona National Guard state surgeon, told [Phoenix ABC affiliate KNXV](#). "We were contacted by a group of volunteers that said they wanted to help protect their state and their communities, and what can they do to help."

	<p>For now, it is of "critical importance" that people continue to social distance, White said.</p> <p>"Even though the vaccine is starting to be distributed in our community, it will be months before we are able to decrease our restrictions," he said. "If we don't continue to do this, we are in danger of overwhelming our clinical departments and our hospitals."</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	01/07 'Severity-zero alert' in SolarWinds attack
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/fireeyes-mandia-severity-zero-alert-led-to-discovery-of-solarwinds-attack/d/d-id/1339851
GIST	<p>FireEye CEO Kevin Mandia today shared some insight on the cyberattack on the security firm that was the first clue to a massive and wide-ranging attack campaign against several major US government and commercial networks.</p> <p>In a panel today hosted by the Aspen Institute, Mandia described how his company first recognized the serious attack it had suffered, describing how a newly registered phone using a FireEye user account was the first indication of malicious activity. "In this particular case, the event that got briefed to me and got us to escalate and declare this a full-blown incident was somebody was accessing our network just like we do, but they were doing it with a second registered device," he explained. The FireEye user whose account was associated with the flagged access was contacted and asked if he had registered a new phone, but he had not.</p> <p>"Even though this was a severity-zero alert" at first, Mandia said, it was evidence of a major security event. "We had somebody bypassing our two-factor authentication by registering a new device and accessing our network just like our employees do, but it actually wasn't our employee" doing it, he said.</p> <p>Details about the illicit phone used in the attack was first reported by Yahoo News last month, in an interview with Charles Carmakal, senior vice president and CTO of FireEye. "They had to provide credentials to authenticate [their device] to the [multifactor authentication system] in order to authenticate to the FireEye VPN," Carmakal told Yahoo News. "It was the process the attacker followed to enroll in the MFA solution, which is what generated the alert. But at this point, the attacker already had the employee's username and password."</p> <p>Mandia said that method of attack was a big red flag. "The minute we saw that, we recognized that's the kind of tradecraft advanced groups would do," Mandia noted. No malware, and under the guise of a legitimate user, "doing exactly what your employees do when they go to work every day."</p> <p>"There's no magical wand that ... finds backdoors in software that we all purchase and trust," he said. "What led us to do that [decompiling] work was, in fact, all of the forensics" we conducted beforehand, he says. FireEye had investigated packet captures and forensic software logs on its endpoints and found one common thread: "It kept backing into, the earliest evidence of compromise for us was the system that harbored the SolarWinds product," he said. So, the company went to work decompiling code and found 4,000 lines of malicious code.</p> <p>The attackers planted malware in legitimate updates to SolarWinds' Orion network management software that was sent to some 18,000 public and private sector customers of the software. According to US intelligence assessments, a very small number of those organizations actually were targeted and compromised.</p> <p>The Attack on FireEye</p> <p>Stage one of the attack planted the backdoor onto FireEye's network via the SolarWinds platform, Mandia said. Stage two used the backdoor to access domain credentials, he said, such as user accounts and</p>

passphrases. "Stage three was to get the token signing-certs to access O365, likely for specific email accounts," Mandia said. The final stage of the FireEye attack was the theft of its red-team tools.

Mandia said he had not seen many ".com" breaches for this type of espionage, so the attack group behind this "smells different."

While the US intelligence community as well as several government officials and security experts have cited [Russia as the perpetrator](#), FireEye has not done so. The company has attributed the attack to an unknown or unclassified group or nation-state. "We have not made any attribution beyond assigning this activity to UNC 2452. An UNC group, short for unclassified, is a cluster of cyber-intrusion activity — which includes observable artifacts such as adversary infrastructure, tools, and tradecraft — that we are not yet ready to give a classification such as APT or FIN," a FireEye spokesperson said. "As we collect additional intelligence, UNC group activity can be assigned to an existing group, graduated to a new group, or simply remain unclassified."

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HEADLINE	01/07 Favorites: Cobalt Strike, Metasploit tools
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/risk/cobalt-strike-and-metasploit-tools-were-attacker-favorites-in-2020/d/d-id/1339854
GIST	<p>Cobalt Strike and Metasploit were the offensive security tools most commonly used to host malware command-and-control (C2) servers in 2020, researchers report.</p> <p>Researchers with Recorded Future's Insikt Group collected more than 10,000 unique C2 servers across at least 80 malware families last year. Cobalt Strike accounted for 1,441 of the C2 servers and Metasploit made up 1,122; combined, they made up 25% of the total C2 servers. Detections of unaltered Cobalt Strike deployments represented 13.5% of C2 servers identified.</p> <p>Offensive security tools, also known as penetration testing tools and red teaming tools, have become part of attackers' toolkits in recent years. Some of these tools mimic an attackers' activity, and attack groups noticed an opportunity to blend in with typical penetration tests.</p> <p>Nearly all of the offensive security tools researchers detected in C2 infrastructure have been connected to APT or advanced financial actors. Cobalt Strike is a favorite among APT41 and Mustang Panda, both associated with China, as well as Ocean Lotus, believed to be a Vietnamese APT group, and cybercrime gang FIN7. Metasploit is popular among APT Group Evilnum and Turla, a stealthy APT group associated with Russia.</p> <p>Greg Lesnewich, senior intelligence analyst at Recorded Future, says it's interesting to see Metasploit prove popular with both Turla, a sophisticated espionage group, and Evilnum, a mercenary group that targets small and midsize businesses with corporate espionage.</p> <p>"These high-end groups use [these tools], and every time they do it makes headlines," he says. "They're obviously getting utility out of them, but they're still being developed and regularly available."</p> <p>More than 40% of the offensive security tools researchers detected were open source, they note.</p> <p>The accessibility and maintenance of these tools make them appealing to attackers of all skill levels, he continues. Metasploit is a well-maintained offensive tool developed by Rapid7. Cobalt Strike, while not technically open source, has several versions floating around the Internet after its source code was leaked. Red teams usually buy the tool, but it's available for anyone to use — and there are guides on the Web to instruct those who don't know how to effectively use it.</p> <p>Both Metasploit and Cobalt Strike "can do much for post-exploitation; they can do so much for initial access," Lesnewich explains. "Conducting full-length intrusions, mostly through either of these tools,</p>

saves [attackers] from having to develop their own stuff as well as makes them look like other actors the tools appeal to."

This benefits everyone: Low-skill attackers can run operations, while high-skill attackers blend in with a company's offensive security practices and benefit from good functionality. As the Insikt Group wrote in a blog post, "the ease of access and use of these tools, mixed with the murkiness of potential attribution, makes them appealing for unauthorized intrusions and red teams alike."

There are reasons attack groups may not need these tools. They may have a narrowly focused goal that doesn't warrant multifunctionality. For example, if they're targeting a person and not an enterprise, they may not need to fully inspect a target device or pivot from victim to victim.

Lesnewich calls both Cobalt Strike and Metasploit "very purple-team friendly." While both do a lot to evade detection, they're not shy about showing defenders how to detect and track their deployments. [Recorded Future's report](#), which lists the 10 most commonly used offensive security tools, can be used to inform C2, host-based, and network-based detections, he says.

"Even though all the groups mentioned could develop their own post-exploitation or C2 framework, the hidden benefit to defenders is how much documentation is written to detect these things," he explains.

With this documentation, blue teams can practice for things on this list that have open source code but aren't very common. Lesnewich says progress is being made toward tracking custom malware families that aren't quite as popular but are still active.

"Finding these things on the Internet doesn't necessarily have to be the defender's priority, but the volume we observe can help create the prioritization list for their work internally," he says.

Lesnewich advises security teams to create a prioritization list to observe previous threat reporting. Tools he recommends include [Yara](#), an open source detection tool for endpoint threats, and [Snort](#), the network detection equivalent.

Secondary to this, Lesnewich suggests taking a closer look inside the company's SIEM and SOAR platforms to detect unusual behavior – for example, if two endpoints should be communicating with a server but instead are communicating with each other.

Tracking the malicious use of offensive security tools is only one step in the defensive security process, he adds. These are a powerful way for defenders to get comfortable with how they can do detection and observe the ins and outs of good tooling. From there, they can begin to track other threats including Emotet and Trickbot, and other things that make noise in the environment.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Trending: Covid-19 vaccine scams
SOURCE	https://cyware.com/news/whats-trending-covid-19-vaccine-scams-9d5ffdd1
GIST	<p>As various COVID-19 vaccines are being approved for vaccination and global distribution, cybercriminals are looming around and using fake websites, false cures, and scams, among other tactics.</p> <p>Ongoing COVID-19 related scams</p> <p>Cybercriminals are constantly using phishing, text messages, malvertising, and fake vaccines to target innocent users. Here are some of the common scams used by attackers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fake products: Threat actors can be observed offering fake vaccines on sale online. These fake products are on sale at several dark web forums.• Phishing emails: coronavirus-related phishing emails are again on the rise; this time most of the spam emails using vaccine-related topics as their subject.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malvertising: advertisements related to the COVID-19 outbreak or vaccine can be observed online. Such ads lead to fraudulent websites that may deploy malware or steal information. • Text messages: COVID-19-related fraudulent texts are making the rounds with fake messages pretending to originate from government agencies that require an online coronavirus test. • Vishing: The attackers were spotted using an uncommon voice phone scam in which they ask victims to press a number on their keypad to confirm an offer for a vaccine. In some cases, bank details were also requested. <p>Security alerts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently, the U.S. Financial Crime Enforcement Network (FinCEN) had asked organizations in the financial sector to watch for and report evidence of COVID-19 vaccine fraud, ransomware, and other scams. • Additionally, Interpol had alerted about the ongoing barrage of COVID-19-related scams and cybercrime. <p>Conclusion</p> <p>A few vaccines have already been rolled out for COVID-19 but governments continue their efforts in this regard, and thus, threat actors are expected to take undue advantage of the situation. Therefore, experts recommend people treat any request for PII made over the phone, via text, or email carefully. Moreover, always cross-check information regarding vaccines if doubtful or visit the official website for the verified information.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Vaccine signup links spreading chaos
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/xgz43d/covid-vaccine-sign-up-links-are-spreading-on-email-chains-and-creating-chaos
GIST	<p>Links to sign up for coveted coronavirus vaccine appointments are being shared widely on social media and email chains nationwide, opening the floodgates to people who aren't yet eligible for the shot.</p> <p>The link-sharing—another hiccup in what's already been a chaotic vaccination campaign—could crowd out the vulnerable people tapped first for the vaccine, like healthcare workers and the elderly.</p> <p>Overwhelmed health departments also don't need the burden of policing line-cutting. And officials have to be careful when fixing the issue not to make the sign-up process so complicated that it discourages patients from getting the vaccine altogether.</p> <p>Making a coronavirus vaccine appointment differs by location. Some cities conduct their scheduling online through sign-up links, websites with special event codes, and sites like Eventbrite, while others take appointments by phone or plan to dole out shots on a first-come, first-serve basis. But the expectation is that only those who are eligible will show up.</p> <p>That's not always the case.</p> <p>In Los Angeles, where the coronavirus pandemic has reached catastrophic heights, non-eligible people received sign-up links intended for healthcare workers through friends and family, according to the Los Angeles Times. One woman who works in the fashion industry received her link from an email that was originally sent to the head of a medical supply company before it was forwarded several times, she told the LA Times. While the registration page specified that vaccines were only for health staff, she wasn't asked to provide proof and was ultimately vaccinated Monday.</p> <p>And in Maryland, the Howard County Health Department said eligible people forwarded their links to hundreds of friends, family members, and colleagues within a 24-hour period, according to WBFF, a Baltimore Fox affiliate. While ineligible people didn't wind up getting the shot, appointments were incorrectly taken from those who qualified, which took time to address.</p>

"When the appointments were filled up by the unauthorized folks, then those we wanted to get in couldn't," Howard County Health Officer Dr. Maura Rossman said of the issue, according to WBFF. "So it did slow and disrupted the flow."

Similar link-sharing has also happened in [Ohio](#), [Michigan](#), and [Texas](#).

The vaccine-booking process has been bad enough for those who qualify. Senior Floridians told the [Tampa Bay Times](#) they were coping with busy signals, dysfunctional websites, and confusion.

Vaccination slots in Knox County, Tennessee, were entirely booked within hours of [being announced last weekend](#). And in Wilson County, Tennessee, one woman told [WTVF, a Nashville CBS affiliate](#), that she'd called her county health department almost 100 times on Wednesday as she struggled to get an appointment for her husband.

What's needed to tamp down on the issue of line-cutting is better, more consistent communication about when people can obtain their shot, according to Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. If people don't know when or whether they'll be notified of their chance to get the vaccine—or that taking someone's slot is analogous to stealing a doctor's appointment, rather than cutting in line at the DMV—they'll get confused and do whatever seems best for themselves and their families at the time.

"There will always be people who try to game the system, but in the absence of a clear understanding about how the system works, and what it means to say that you now have access, you're going to have some people with the best of intentions try to also make appointments for other people," Jamieson said. Some people may also not understand that vaccine prioritization differs state by state, or that doses have occasionally been handed out to non-qualifying people simply because they were about to expire. Jamieson noted that one man and his friend were able to be [vaccinated at a Giant Food in Washington, D.C.](#), because a set of health care workers didn't show.

Alaskan seniors tried to snag slots over the weekend after email chains featured a shareable link that allowed them to find a provider to make an appointment, according to the [Anchorage Daily News](#). Some elderly Alaskans wrongly assumed that, since they were able to book a slot, they were eligible to do so. The state has since accelerated its vaccine schedule to allow people over 65 to get the shot starting next week, according to the [Daily News](#).

"There was a little bit of confusion. We've had some Alaskans that are 65 and older register before then," Heidi Hedberg, the state's director of public health, said at a presentation to the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce Monday, according to the Daily News. "It's OK. Don't cancel that appointment."

But in Rhode Island, some people appeared to intentionally skip ahead. Several hundred non-eligible people tried to book vaccination times after those in high-priority groups altered their special, confidential links so they could be shared with those in lower-priority categories, according to the [Providence Journal](#). As a result, the state's health department scrambled Monday to take down registration links, cancel appointments, notify health care partners of the problem, and take other protective measures, according to the Journal.

"They somehow cheated the system," Alysia Mihalakos, co-lead of the Rhode Island Health Department's Mass Vaccination Workgroup, said Tuesday during a media briefing, according to the Journal. "The demand for vaccine is clearly very high, and people are willing to push others aside in order to get themselves or their loved ones vaccinated."

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HEADLINE	01/07 Game livestreaming site extremist haven
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/dlive-livestreaming-site-extremist-haven/

WEDNESDAY'S INSURRECTION IN the US Capitol wasn't just broadcast by journalists and bystanders with smartphones; it was [broadcast](#) by its own perpetrators.

Mainstream platforms like Facebook [cracked down](#) on videos glorifying the attack, fueled in part by the bogus claim that the presidential election was stolen from Donald Trump. Lesser-known platforms that have supported extremists and conspiracy theorists for years were also activated by the insurrection. Among them is a blockchain-based livestreaming site called DLive, which hosted multiple streams from the Capitol on Wednesday and allowed viewers to donate directly to the streamers as they broadcast their actions and misinformation.

Channels with hundreds of viewers went live on Wednesday with titles like "March to Save America," and "Time to Take Our Country Back." More than 140,000 DLive viewers watched streams about the events at the Capitol, many condoning or encouraging the mob there. At least one person streamed after breaking into the Capitol itself as donations flooded in.

DLive was founded by entrepreneur Charles Wayn in 2017 as a lower-scale competitor to Amazon's Twitch. The platform broke into the mainstream when YouTube's top gaming celebrity, Felix "PewDiePie" Kjellberg, streamed there exclusively for a brief period starting in 2019. Since then the site has kept growing, from the 4,322nd-ranked site [according to Alexa](#) in October to 3,273rd today.

A major contributor to DLive's growth has been the white nationalist leaders and other far-right personalities who fled there after bans on YouTube, Twitch, Facebook, and elsewhere. On DLive, however, they've been able to cultivate enormous audiences thanks to the platform's lenient, hands-off moderation. Dozens of prominent extremists and conspiracy theorists stream on the site, many under "Verified Partner" badges. They're also able to earn money there, via DLive's in-app currency, Lemon, often amounting to tens of thousands of dollars, according to data shared with WIRED by a livestreaming analyst. In August, *Time* [reported](#) that eight of the top 10 earners were extremists or conspiracy theorists.

One streamer who received donations as he stormed the Capitol on Wednesday was Tim Gionet, also known as BakedAlaska. Gionet was [banned from](#) Twitter in 2017; YouTube removed his channel in October after he harassed retail workers over wearing masks. On Wednesday he streamed on DLive for over 20 minutes from inside the Capitol, reaching an audience of over 17,000 at its peak. "Thank you everyone for sharing this video," he said at one point, before encouraging the mob around him to start an "America first" chant. Online viewers in his livestream joined in the chatroom, [asking him](#) to "SMASH THE WINDOW" or "HANG ALL THE CONGRESSMEN." They also rewarded him with donations. Elon University professor Megan Squire, an expert on online extremism, estimates that fans donated thousands of dollars to him yesterday through lemons.

In another Dlive streamer's video from DC, the person points the camera at a line of cop cars and says, "I was waiting for some content. I tried to get back to the Capitol for you boys, but it's not possible. So this is what's happening."

In a livestream today, DLive's head of community addressed yesterday's events: "I do want to make it incredibly, incredibly clear that DLive does not condone any illegal activity. Peaceful protests? Fine. Reporting on the protests? Fine. But if your channel or you the streamer are involved in any illegal activity, your channel will be taken offline." A representative for DLive did not return a request for comment from WIRED. StreamElements, which helped facilitate the DLive donations to Gionet, today removed his account, telling WIRED he violated their terms of service.

DLive's [community guidelines](#) also prohibit hate speech, but it explicitly puts the onus for moderation on channel owners and moderators: "DLive provides tools to aid moderators, but does not prescribe their usage. Channel owners and moderators are required to moderate the chat based on the community guidelines above."

"DLive does not have the moderation facilities familiar to users on most social media platforms," says Squire. Users use the same contact [form](#) to report an account spreading hate speech as they would asking

for technical support or the legal team. “There is no support inbox or any sort of way to interact with a moderation team or the like.”

Instead, as the attack on the Capitol roiled on yesterday, savvy Twitter users disturbed by Gionet’s stream raced to identify DLive’s hosting provider and content distribution network (CDN), or the group of servers delivering content on DLive. Once they discovered that Peer5 was DLive’s CDN, Twitter users @ed the company, notifying them of Gionet’s stream. Within minutes, employees indicated they were taking action.

"Peer5’s terms of service prohibit the use of our service in connection with any content that is unlawful, harmful, or otherwise objectionable, among other things," a company representative told WIRED. "We learned in real time that harmful content related to today’s events was being streamed on DLive. We have taken immediate action, in coordination with DLive, to remove that content." The company did not comment further on DLive's involvement in its actions, but it said it will continue to monitor streams on DLive. While Gionet’s videos from the Capitol have disappeared, his account remains online with a Verified Partner badge.

One former DLive employee told *Time* in August that “they care more about having good numbers than weeding these people out.” DLive’s continued apathy toward who it hosts isn’t a simple matter of free speech and censorship. By allowing extremists to remain on their platform, DLive serves as a recruitment tool. Decades ago, says Squire, white supremacist groups met in person and used electronic media like email for communication. “Things are opposite now,” she says. “They meet online and move offline for real-world action once they find a viable activity or trust one another enough to do so.”

Squire points to Nick Fuentes, who hosts the far-right podcast America First and received \$44,000 in donations through DLive in the last two months of 2020, [according to](#) the Southern Poverty Law Center. Fuentes mobilizes his followers in person, including at the Million MAGA March in Washington DC, where he [spoke](#) onstage to eager followers. Gionet too was present at the march.

As of Thursday afternoon, Gionet’s chat was still active and buzzing with fans despite his being offline. Only now users speculated whether he would go to jail. Wrote one DLive user, “Lemon drop for some commissary funds?”

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HEADLINE	01/07 Judge sentences Russian hacker 12yrs
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/russian-national-gets-12-years-in-prison-for-major-hacks-hitting-jp-morgan-chase-and-others/2021/01/07/3b7c1d48-5140-11eb-b96e-0e54447b23a1_story.html
GIST	<p>NEW YORK — A highly skilled Russian hacker for hire who breached the networks of JPMorgan Chase, the Wall Street Journal and other major institutions — stealing information from over 100 million victims — was sentenced to a dozen years in federal prison on Thursday.</p> <p>Assisting other international criminals in illegal gambling, securities fraud and payment processing operations, professional cybercriminal Andrei Tyurin personally made about \$20 million targeting financial institutions, brokerage firms and publishers of financial news on behalf of the partners he worked with between 2007 and 2015, according to prosecutors.</p> <p>The partners, who were also indicted by the U.S. attorney’s office in Manhattan, made hundreds of millions utilizing the stolen customer data in scams that revolved around illegal online casinos and pharmaceutical stores, as well as payment processing. For themselves and other illegal business operations, they manipulated data to conceal the true nature of credit and debit card transactions from Visa and Mastercard.</p>

Tyurin, 37, pleaded guilty to wire fraud, conspiracy and bank fraud charges in 2019 for selling the stolen information to the crew headed by Tel Aviv-based Gery Shalon and working on his behalf to hack the computer networks of competition. Tyurin's hacking of JPMorgan Chase alone netted 80 million victims and is considered one of the largest thefts of customer information against a U.S. financial institution in history.

He was sentenced to 12 years in prison by U.S. District Judge Laura Taylor Swain, and he will be removed from the United States upon his release.

Prosecutors said Tyurin for a time worked exclusively for Shalon, who is an Israeli citizen. Shalon with two other men, Joshua Samuel Aaron and Ziv Orenstein, "ran a variety of criminal businesses" that "catered to U.S. customers," yet Tyurin was the "key" to the group's ability to turn massive profits, at least in part because they could stay ahead of competition through his breaches, according to a sentencing memorandum filed by the U.S. attorney's office.

Tyurin also infiltrated organizations like E-Trade and Scottrade, facilitating a lucrative pump-and-dump scheme by Shalon and Aaron, according to prosecutors.

According to the memo, the group procured servers in Brazil, Egypt, the Czech Republic, South Africa and other countries to assist Tyurin's efforts.

"Tyurin then used this infrastructure, from his home in Moscow, to gain unlawful access to the companies' computer networks and to receive data stolen from those networks as a result of his work," says the memo filed by Assistant U.S. Attorney Eun Young Choi.

Shalon was arrested at his home in Israel in 2015, leading investigators to uncover the identity of Tyurin through materials and communications that were recovered, authorities said. Shalon and Orenstein were extradited to be prosecuted in the United States in June 2016. Aaron was also arrested before Tyurin's apprehension in Georgia in the former Soviet Union in December 2017.

Tyurin was ordered to forfeit about \$20 million, and he will probably owe the same amount in restitution after a hearing scheduled for April 6.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Federal judiciary system likely breached
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/federal-judiciarys-systems-likely-breached-in-solarwinds-hack-11610040175?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—The electronic filing system used by federal courts has likely been compromised in the massive SolarWinds hack, federal judiciary officials said, extending to another branch of government the impact of a suspected Russian cyber-espionage campaign that has breached more than half a dozen Trump administration agencies.</p> <p>The federal judiciary was working to immediately add new security procedures to protect "highly sensitive confidential documents filed with the courts," according to a statement Wednesday by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts.</p> <p>"An apparent compromise of the confidentiality of the [filing] system due to these discovered vulnerabilities currently is under investigation," the statement said. "Due to the nature of the attacks, the review of this matter and its impact is ongoing."</p> <p>Beginning Wednesday, highly sensitive court documents filed with federal courts on paper or via secure electronic devices will be stored in a stand-alone computer system, according to the statement, and won't be uploaded as usual to the electronic case-filing system. The new procedure wouldn't change public access to court records because sealed records already aren't available to the public, it said.</p>

Gaining access to confidential judiciary records could be especially valuable to foreign spies, analysts said, because of the extreme sensitivity of information they often contain, including investigative techniques described in search warrants or specific email accounts or phone numbers being surveilled.

“Documents like these are a road map of investigations,” said Seamus Hughes, an expert on federal court records and deputy director of the Program on Extremism at George Washington University. “In the right hands, they could tip off a target of investigation, be it an individual or a country’s intelligence apparatus.”

Sealed court records could also include information about informants or others cooperating with the Federal Bureau of Investigation,” Mr. Hughes said. “If exploited correctly, it’ll set back criminal prosecutions for years,” he said.

Investigators are [still working to understand the full extent of the suspected Russian hack](#), which has been linked to a malicious update to widely used software provided by Texas-based network-management company SolarWinds Corp. Authorities believe that update was used to compromise U.S. government agencies and scores of private businesses across the globe.

[A number of high-profile companies](#), including [Microsoft](#) Corp. , [Intel](#) Corp. and [Cisco Systems](#) Inc., and the security vendor [FireEye](#) Inc., have confirmed that they were hacked or they downloaded malicious software related to the intrusion.

But many affected companies have remained silent, said Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, during a videoconference hosted by the Aspen Institute on Thursday.

“The number of brand, brand-name players that are involved in this, what we call SolarWinds intrusion right now, that have not come forward would surprise the hell out of many of the people watching this,” he said.

SolarWinds, which has been criticized for not being fully transparent about its breach, in a Thursday blog post said it was making changes to improve its product security. The company also has hired two well-respected security consultants: Alex Stamos, formerly chief security officer at Facebook Inc., and Chris Krebs, formerly the Department of Homeland Security’s top cybersecurity official.

Mr. Krebs [was fired](#) by President Trump in November after reporting that there was no evidence that voting systems had been tampered with during the 2020 presidential election. Since then, he and Mr. Stamos have formed a cybersecurity consulting firm, called Krebs Stamos Group LLC, to help companies develop new cybersecurity programs and respond to hacking emergencies, Mr. Stamos said.

The two men will “provide best-in-class guidance on our journey to evolve into an industry leading secure software development company,” SolarWinds said in a statement. The hire was reported earlier by the Financial Times.

Mr. Warner, a Virginia Democrat, also accused the White House of watering down a joint statement issued by four federal agencies this week that said the hack was “likely Russian in origin.”

Officials and others familiar with the matter have said the evidence of the Russian government’s culpability is overwhelming, and one senior official described that view as “pretty unanimous.” The White House National Security Council didn’t immediately respond to a request to comment.

On Wednesday, [the Justice Department became the latest](#) executive-branch agency to identify a compromise of its systems related to the hack, which has been under way for more than a year but was discovered only last month. Other federal agencies affected include the departments of State, Treasury, Commerce and Energy, according to officials and others familiar with the investigation.

	<p>Although many of the victims of this campaign were compromised by downloading the SolarWinds software, the Department of Homeland Security's cybersecurity group now says that the hackers used other standard techniques to break in too, meaning that some of these victims aren't SolarWinds customers. There may be other methods of intrusion "that aren't yet known," the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency said Wednesday.</p> <p>Investigators are also looking into whether another piece of software, built by a Czech company called JetBrains s.r.o., might have played a role in the SolarWinds hack. JetBrains said on Wednesday that it was unaware of any breach.</p> <p>Investigators are reviewing how the breach went undetected for so long and whether there were avenues of attack. Moscow has denied involvement.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 CISA: token abuse in SolarWinds hack
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/home/security-news/updated-cisa-directive-discovers-saml-token-abuse-around-solarwinds-hack-calls-for-full-rebuild-of-affected-networks/
GIST	<p>Largely lost in the fallout from yesterday's Capitol riots was an update on a mandatory order to federal agencies responding the SolarWinds hack.</p> <p>An alert from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency at the Department of Homeland Security pointed to evidence of initial access vectors beyond SolarWinds' Orion platform, and abuse of SAML authentication tokens that mirror behaviors of the actor behind the compromise. An attacker gaining access to these tokens could be catastrophic for identity validation and likely requires a full rebuild of the network. The agency referenced guidance from Microsoft for further instructions.</p> <p>"If the adversary has compromised administrative level credentials in an environment — or if organizations identify SAML abuse in the environment, simply mitigating individual issues, systems, servers, or specific user accounts will likely not lead to the adversary's removal from the network," CISA wrote. "In such cases, organizations should consider the entire identity trust store as compromised. In the event of a total identity compromise, a full reconstitution of identity and trust services is required to successfully remediate. In this reconstitution, it bears repeating that this threat actor is among the most capable, and in many cases, a full rebuild of the environment is the safest action."</p> <p>As with many of its directives responding to widespread vulnerabilities, the agency made it clear that while only federal civilian agencies are required to follow the directive, it can also serve as general guidance to those outside the federal government.</p> <p>"CISA has determined that this threat poses a grave risk to the Federal Government and state, local, tribal, and territorial governments as well as critical infrastructure entities and other private sector organizations," the agency wrote.</p> <p>It also updated a Dec. 18 Binding Operational Directive, released indicators of compromise and issued supplemental guidance on which agencies can turn back on their Orion software and under what conditions. For the following versions, agencies must run forensic analysis, comply with new hardening requirements and reporting from department and agency-level Chief Information Officers by Jan. 25.</p> <p>Versions that have been confirmed to be unaffected by the initial compromise are safe to turn back on following an upgrade to the latest version of Orion. The agency said IT teams may need to rebuild or reinstall their SolarWinds components.</p> <p>For affected versions, a more complex decision-set must take place. Networks that do not have the malicious code and can confirm through forensics that it was never present are safe to use Orion software again. So too are networks where forensic analysis indicates they have not beacons out to a command</p>

and control server or had secondary command and control activity to other domains. That guidance applies to the following versions of Orion:

2019.4 HF5

2020.2 RC1

2020.2 RC2

2020.2

2020.2 HF1

In both cases, the organization would still need to go through a full network rebuild and reset all accounts before its safe to continue using the Orion platform.

For agencies or organizations that lack the capability to conduct forensic analysis, CISA recommends at least using the available indicators of compromise and other available evidence of the adversary's behavior to hunt for suspicious activity on their network.

The follow up guidance comes days after CISA along with the FBI, National Security Agency and Office of Director of National Intelligence issued a joint statement that "an Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) actor, likely Russian in origin, is responsible for most or all of the recently discovered, ongoing [SolarWinds] cyber compromises of both government and non-governmental networks."

On a Jan. 7 virtual conference hosted by the Aspen Institute, Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., said the White House had "watered down" the attribution statement and claimed the government's real position is much more categorical. Multiple news reports citing intelligence officials have pinned the blame on APT29, or Cozy Bear, one of two groups tied to Russian intelligence that were behind the 2016 DNC hack. The public hack and leak campaign of DNC emails, not remotely considered run of the mill espionage, was done by a second APT group, Fancy Bear, with ties to the Russian GRU.

It also follows disclosures that 3,000 Department of Justice email accounts and the federal courts system were also impacted by the hack. While some U.S. lawmakers and other observers have likened the hack to an act of war, the agencies continue to assert the objective was espionage, a far more commonly accepted method of intelligence gathering that the U.S. and other nations engage in regularly. It's not just the government that is seeing an expanded list of victims. Warner indicated more breach disclosures in the private sector are forthcoming, saying the number of well-known brands who know they have been compromised but haven't announced was surprising.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Physical breach Capitol a cyber challenge?
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/home/security-news/data-breach/the-physical-breach-of-the-capitol-building-opens-a-cybersecurity-pandoras-box/
GIST	<p>The insurrection at the U.S. Capitol Wednesday, which saw rioters storm the building and reportedly steal devices belonging to government officials, opened what one cybersecurity expert has called a Pandora's box of national security and data privacy issues.</p> <p>Multiple sources pointed to the need to treat the incident as a breach of IT assets, regardless of whether evidence shows any malicious activity: devices will need to be swept, technical surveillance countermeasures will have to be put in place to ensure there are no eavesdropping devices, and network traffic must be monitored long term.</p> <p>"When you lose physical control of a space, you have to assume everything is compromised," said Bryson Bort, founder and CEO at SCYTHE. "Everything should be rebuilt from the ground up."</p> <p>The incident, as well as the response among those on Capitol Hill tasked with securing government technology assets, serves as a dramatic and evolving case study for public and private sector entities regarding the scope of cybersecurity risk tied to a physical breach.</p>

Assessing the damage

In the initial hours, days and weeks, cybersecurity teams will be considering risk factors that existed at the time of the incident.

“If their workstations were unlocked during the scurry there is no telling what could have been accessed with the privileges of the user,” said M. Michael Mitama, CEO at THETA432. “Whatever the end user was reviewing at the time would have been left open for all eyes to see. Mobile phones could have captured photos of the desktop contents to be used later in consequential attacks. USB access (if not blocked) could have introduced malware into the entire network of the hosts. Ransomware introduction could have shut down the entire network and would have caused catastrophic outages if USB ports were not protected.”

A former Senate staffer who focused on cybersecurity issues in Congress until last year told SC Media that the open concept architecture of the Capitol and uncertainty about how many offices and buildings were breached create gaps that must be filled in before a more accurate damage assessment can be done.

And while the staffer agreed that any physical breach of a building by outsiders requires all to “assume compromise,” calls to rip and replace every computer or device are probably not necessary. Rather, law enforcement should be using evidence from video cameras inside the halls to pinpoint which offices or sections of buildings were flooded by protestors and whether they entered any offices.

“The ability to prevent cyber incidents from happening are basic IT protocols,” said Kiersten Todt, managing director of the Cyber Readiness Institute. What “we’ll learn is if those protocols were followed.”

Had the breach happened two years ago, the Senate would have been much more vulnerable. In 2018 Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., successfully pushed the Senate Rules and Administration Committee to mandate encryption by default for all new Senate devices. Congressional IT generally works on a two-to-three-year refresh cycle, so data on many devices installed since then are far better protected than before.

Common security features like two-factor authentication and autolocking computer screens after a few minutes of inactivity are not mandatory, and congressional staff must proactively request such setups first. While there is segregation of congressional networks in some places, all 100 senators share the same email server and network infrastructure. All of these factors will be considered as security teams assess the damage.

Social media may provide insight as well. Photos of a rioter accessing Outlook on a congressional workstation, for example, suggests that protocols may not have been followed or that they fell short. Perhaps, said Bob Maley, chief security officer at Normshield, the period of time before the system automatically locked was too long.

Perhaps more critical still, congressional cybersecurity teams will need to identify how many devices were taken and whether they had encryption set by default.

“If the Capitol had device management capabilities on their mobile devices, laptops, tablets, mobile phones, etc., they can administer these devices via remote wiping if stolen,” said Mitama. “If they were computers and they had a LoJack type of software, they could actually track the device to the location and send the police or FBI for retrieval.”

If the security operations center was able to push notifications of a breach, a remote command to restart all systems should have been pushed at the time also, said Joseph Neumann, director of offensive security at Coalfire. That, along with full disk encryption, “should be enough to secure the endpoints to a degree. Secondly, the SOC should or possibly may have network isolated the building, rooms, from data centers or external resources.”

But is all of this happening? One can hope, though Neumann fears that “with the rush back to normalcy” the proper procedures might be shortchanged.

Potential exposure

Beyond near-term efforts to address immediate risk, cyber teams will need to consider the type of information exposed, and who might gain access.

“If you are a foreign government, especially one of the big four state-sponsored cyber adversaries, you’re going to see that as an opportunity to mix with the crowd,” said the staffer. “And if you get in and have a thumb drive, that could be a profound, profound compromise” with long-term consequences, not unlike the current circumstances [tied to the SolarWinds hack](#).

That scenario might be more likely if rioters shared their plans online.

“I’d like to know if there was intel on [the] dark web about the group’s activities” and plans, said Bob Maley. Bad actors monitoring those channels may have decided “this is going down, disruption is happening, and I’m going to insert myself in this disruption.”

Cyber experts doubt that those who stormed the Capitol picked off classified information, which is typically housed in secure facilities that are not easy to find or access, is under armed guard at all times and include strict lockdown protocols in the event of an ongoing breach. While it’s “exceptionally unlikely” the invaders got in there, the former Senate staffer said, some offices do have safes that contain classified information at the Secret level or below. Those offices are supposed to be locked when staffers leave, but the chaos and speed of the breach and evacuation means many likely did not.

Beyond that, classified information isn’t the only valuable data lying around. Communications from Congress or their staff to other members or outside parties contain insights into ongoing policy disputes, who has influence, pressure points for blackmail and other unclassified information that would be valuable to a foreign intelligence operation.

“Even if you’re just looking at emails, that’s a lot of valuable intelligence – especially if you’re the Chinese and trying to understand how we function and the dysfunction associated with Congress. That’s a treasure trove,” said the staffer. “People are informal over email, people express their displeasure over email in a way that’s not ready for prime time. It’s valuable in terms of targeting folks for counterintelligence reasons, who may be vulnerable, but also understanding where the beef is and who has conflicts.”

Indeed, Bort said even access to unclassified systems at Congress “would still be interesting: being able to know what McConnell, Pelosi, Schumer or McCarthy is doing in real-time with detail has huge value.”

Beyond immediate efforts toward damage control, security teams will need to focus on what may have been left behind: any malicious files or installers, or USB drives placed in drawers containing malware. “The work to be done is to check logs and to assess file access and registries on machines, on servers, especially email, to see if confidential information was sent outside from a legitimate account during this raid,” said Dirk Schrader, global vice president at New Net Technologies.

Going forward, Congress and the private sector must focus efforts on tightening security and encouraging cyber hygiene. Just like pandemic planning came to the forefront, organizations now must “pull out the contingency planning binder again and revisit civil unrest procedures,” said Neumann, including full disk encryption, data at rest, and SOC procedures. Also critical is strict multifactor authentication, limited admin access and shortening the time period before systems lock down.

The private sector might be better prepared in some respects. “Most corporations have these protocols in place. However, to be overwhelmed by a crowd of this many people would take the intervention of law enforcement,” said Mitamo. “If we look at this scenario from a defense in depth perspective, we would find that this type of intrusion could be prevented during this type of situation.”

	And as organizations focus on network security in the wake of the SolarWinds hack , “they can’t lose sight of what physical events can do,” Todt said. That government and the private sector keep getting caught with their pants down, “is a failure of imagination.”
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HEADLINE	01/07 Data stolen from London council online
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/data-stolen-council-online/
GIST	<p>Sensitive data stolen from Hackney Council in the UK has allegedly been published online, three months after the ransomware attack on the local authority that took place last year.</p> <p>A cyber-criminal group called Pysa/Mespinoza has claimed it has published a range of information resulting from the incident on the dark web. This includes sensitive personal data of staff and residents, such as passport documents.</p> <p>In October 2020, London’s Hackney Council revealed it had been victim of a serious cyber-attack which affected many of its services and IT systems.</p> <p>In a new statement on its website, the council said it was working with NCSC, National Crime Agency, Information Commissioner's Office, the Metropolitan Police and other experts to investigate what has been published and the next steps to take.</p> <p>It noted that experts believe the data has not been published on a widely available public forum and is not visible through internet search engines, adding that “at this stage, it appears that the vast majority of the sensitive or personal information held by the council is unaffected, but the council and its partners are reviewing the data carefully and will support any directly affected people.”</p> <p>Mayor of Hackney, Philip Glanville, stated: “I fully understand and share the concern of residents and staff about any risk to their personal data, and we are working as quickly as possible with our partners to assess the data and take action, including informing people who are affected.</p> <p>“While we believe this publication will not directly affect the vast majority of Hackney’s residents and businesses, that can feel like cold comfort, and we are sorry for the worry and upset this will cause them.</p> <p>“We are already working closely with the police and other partners to assess any immediate actions we need to take, and will share further information about the additional action we will be taking as soon as we can.”</p> <p>Commenting on the story, Matt Aldridge, principal solutions architect, Carbonite & Webroot, said: “Once a data breach has occurred, and the data has been exfiltrated, no amount of ransom payment can guarantee that all copies of the data will be securely destroyed. For this reason, it is critical that all organizations invest appropriately in their cyber-defenses and, wherever possible, that they have their approach validated by trusted independent third parties.</p> <p>“Understanding the criticality and sensitivity of all organizational data is key, and different data types, locations and classifications should be protected appropriately, with more investment and protection being put in place to protect the most sensitive data within the organization. Regular reviews need to be made to keep on top of this situation, as data locations, types and flows are constantly changing in any modern organization.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 DOJ jails Cuban credit card cyber-gang
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/us-jails-cuban-credit-card/

GIST	<p>The United States has imprisoned the leader and several members of a cyber-gang that stole \$5m in a skimming attack on gas pumps in the Eastern District of Virginia.</p> <p>According to court documents, the six conspirators placed skimming devices on gas pumps located in Northampton County. The devices recorded the credit and debit card numbers, along with their PINs, of customers who used their card at the pump to pay for gas.</p> <p>In April and May 2018, the crew traveled to various branches of the supermarket Harris Teeter, among other destinations, and used the stolen card information to withdraw money from the victims' bank accounts. The illicitly obtained financial data was also exploited to purchase prepaid gift cards.</p> <p>The all-male crew, who are all Cuban nationals residing in Florida, was sentenced on January 5 to a total of more than 28 years in prison. Four of the men were convicted of aggravated ID theft while all six were convicted of conspiracy to commit bank fraud.</p> <p>Several other conspirators involved in the attack remain at large and are thought to be living in Mexico.</p> <p>The Department of Justice said that many of the conspirators "had significant criminal histories involving the same conduct and were known to travel the country perpetrating this scheme." Over the course of several years, the gang caused victims to suffer aggregate losses of over \$5m.</p> <p>Crew leader Yasmani Granja Quijada used his email account to deal in stolen data. The 33-year-old was found to be trading over 9,800 additional stolen credit card numbers.</p> <p>Quijada received the largest sentence of 120 months in prison. Twenty-nine-year-old Luis Miguel Fernandez Cardente received 64 months; 31-year-old Jorge Bello Fuentes, 60 months; 34-year-old Guillermo Bello Fuentes, 47 months; 40-year-old Pedro Emilio Duran, 30 months; and 29-year-old Yariel Monsibaez Ruiz, 19 months.</p> <p>The FBI and US Marshals Service seized numerous vehicles and other items that were purchased by the criminals with stolen funds, including a 2006 Triton 2895CC Boat and trailer, a 2017 Ford F250 Super Cab truck, a 2016 Cruise Radiance Travel Trailer RV, a 2017 Ford Escape SUV, a 2017 Maserati Ghibli, and a 2013 Porsche Panamera.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Juspay breach; card data sold online
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/juspay-data-breach-card-data-sold-dark-web/
GIST	<p>The Indian startup Juspay handles payments for online marketplaces, including Amazon.</p> <p>Juspay suffered a data breach around five months back, and now the investigation has revealed that around 35 million (3.5 crores) Juspay customers have been affected.</p> <p>It is worth noting that Juspay is among the list of 26 companies that were reported by Hackread.com on January 2nd to have suffered a data breach. Currently, a hacker is selling 365 million user records and that also includes Juspay.</p> <p>The information stolen at the time is being sold on the dark web. According to security researcher Rajshkhar Rajaharia, sensitive data of around 35 million credit cardholders in India was compromised in the breach.</p> <p>The researcher took to Twitter to reveal details of the data breach. Rajaharia stated that the compromised data include the name, bank name, and mobile number of the customers whose payment data was stored by the company.</p>

He also shared a screenshot of some of the dumped data.

Juspay Data Breach

Juspay identified unauthorized activity on August 18, 2020. The company was alerted in the early hours of the morning. According to the official statement released by Juspay, the unusual activity was noticed in one of its data stores.

Investigation revealed that threat actors used an unrecycled, old Amazon Web Services access key to access the server. This triggered an automatic system alert because of a sudden boost in the data store's system resources. The company immediately stopped the intrusion by terminating the server and sealing its entry points. The same day they conducted a system audit.

"Within the same day, a system audit was done to make sure the entire category of such issues is prevented. Our merchants were informed of the cyberattack on the same day and we worked with them to take various precautionary measures to safeguard information," the company [stated](#).

The company refreshed the API keys and invalidated the old keys. Other mitigation measures included enforcing 2FA authentication for all tools, adding threat-monitoring

Too Little Too Late

Juspay has employed a delaying approach, and the company is continuously trying to downplay the incident. The time lag between the breach and its public disclosure is certainly problematic to the cybersecurity fraternity.

Juspay, although informed its partners it didn't reveal details of the breach to the public until Rajaharia discovered the data dump. Gurukul's CEO Saryu Nayyar stated that there could be many gaps in Juspay's security stack.

"Perhaps the biggest concern is the dwell time. The breach happening mid-August 2020 and only being reported now, indicates there may have been some gaps in Juspay's security stack or their security operations process."

Juspay has stated in its statement that the attackers didn't access sensitive data and breached 35 million records that contained non-sensitive information such as "masked card data and card fingerprint."

"The masked card data is used for display purposes on merchant UI and cannot be used for completing a transaction."

Juspay acknowledged that some of the compromised records contained plain-text, non-anonymized email, and contact numbers. It also had anonymous metadata of around 100 million processed transactions. Its subset contained mobile and email information.

"All of the customers' full card numbers, order information, card PINs, or passwords are secure. The compromised data does not contain any transaction or order information. About 3.5 crore records with masked card data and card fingerprint (which is non-sensitive information) were breached... A part of user metadata in our system which has non-anonymized, plain-text email IDs and phone numbers got compromised."

About Juspay?

Juspay is a Bengaluru-based startup in India that handles payments of numerous digital marketplaces such as Amazon, Yatra, Swiggy, Freecharge, MakeMyTrip, BookMyShow, and Snapdeal. The company offers payment transaction services to leading online retailers in India, managing over 650,000 upwards per day.

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SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/scammer-extorts-site-owners-using-porn-backlinks-threat/
GIST	<p>Website owners are receiving emails threatening to ruin their reputation if they do not post a five-star review for a cryptocurrency exchange.</p> <p>Today, BleepingComputer received an extortion email through our contact form demanding we post a 5-star review and perform two likes/shares for the coinmama.com cryptocurrency exchange. If we do not do what they require within 48 hours, the extortionist claims they will create millions of backlinks to our site from porn sites to ruin our reputation.</p> <p><i>I need you to leave a 5 star review for us and also like us and share our posts on our social media channels.</i></p> <p><i>I am giving you 48 hours. If I do not see a 5 star review from you and at least two likes and shares on our channels, I am going to send millions of porn backlinks to bleepingcomputer.com which will completely kill off your site. I have sent a few dozen spam links to your site already. You can have a look. I will remove those once I see reviews.</i></p> <p><i>Ok this should have gotten your attention. Now here is what you need to do.</i></p> <p><i>SKIP AD</i> Give us five stars: https://www.trustpilot.com/review/coinmama.com</p> <p>Follow us on and like our posts: https://www.facebook.com/Coinmama/ https://twitter.com/coinmama https://t.me/coinmamanews https://il.linkedin.com/company/coinmama</p> <p><i>Thanks for your cooperation!</i> <i>Regards</i> <i>Dusyanthan Balasubramanian</i></p> <p>Coinmama CEO Sagi Bakshi told BleepingComputer that they are not responsible for these emails and are investigating the attack on their reputation.</p> <p>If this was meant as an attack on their brand, then it is working as intended, as other website owners who received this email have started to leave negative reviews on their Trustpilot page.</p> <p>In June 2019, a different extortion scam targeting web site owners was making the rounds. In that campaign, the scammers threatened to ruin a site's reputation unless they paid \$2,400 in bitcoin.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Hacker sells Canada pot producer files
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hacker-sells-aurora-cannabis-files-stolen-in-christmas-cyberattack/
GIST	<p>A hacker is selling the data stolen from cannabis giant Aurora Cannabis after breaching their systems on Christmas day.</p> <p>Aurora Cannabis is a Canadian cannabis producer listed on both the Toronto Stock Exchange and the New York Stock Exchange. The company operates numerous cannabis-related medical and consumer brands, including MedRelease, CanniMed, Whistler Medical Marijuana Corp., San Rafael, Daily Special, and Woodstock.</p> <p>Marijuana Business Daily reported that former and current employees received data breach notifications from Aurora Cannabis after the company suffered a cyberattack on December 25th, 2020.</p>

The data breach notifications describe what data was stolen in the attack, with each employee reporting different compromised data.

"He said each person reported different data compromised in the breach, including credit card information, government identification, home addresses and banking details," MBD [reported](#).

Hacker selling stolen data for one bitcoin

Today, the hacker behind the Aurora Cannabis attack began selling the stolen data on a hacker forum for one bitcoin, approximately 39,000 at today's prices. As part of the post to promote the sale, the threat actor leaked images of eleven files stolen during the attack.

Hacker forum post selling Aurora Cannabis data

The samples of stolen data included images of passports, checks, driver licenses, and business documents.

In an interview with the hacker, BleepingComputer was told that Aurora Cannabis was breached on December 25th after the threat actor hacked into their network.

The threat actor claims to have stolen 50GB of data, including customers' and employees' personal information.

After stealing the data, the hacker states they contacted Aurora Cannabis to ransom the data back to them, but "all them ignore this breach."

The threat actor claims that they still have access to Aurora's network. When asked if Aurora knows that they continue to have access, BleepingComputer was told, "i send mail but i think all employs ignored me."

BleepingComputer has contacted Aurora Cannabis about the attack but did not receive a response.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Ryuk bitcoin wallets point to \$150M funds
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ryuk-ransomware-bitcoin-wallets-point-to-150-million-operation/
GIST	<p>Security researchers following the money circuit from Ryuk ransomware victims into the threat actor's pockets estimate that the criminal organization made at least \$150 million.</p> <p>They found that Ryuk operators primarily use two legitimate cryptocurrency exchanges to cash out the Bitcoin from paying victims as fiat money.</p> <p>Ryuk's money circuit</p> <p>Threat intelligence companies Advanced Intelligence and HYAS tracked 61 Bitcoin wallets attributed to the Ryuk malware enterprise and discovered that the cryptocurrency moves from an intermediary to Huobi and Binance exchanges.</p> <p>When a Ryuk victim pays the ransom, the money reaches a broker that passes it to the malware operators. The money then goes through a laundering service before getting to legitimate cryptocurrency exchanges or being used to pay for criminal services on underground markets.</p> <p>"In addition to Huobi and Binance, which are large and well-established exchanges, there are significant flows of crypto currency to a collection of addresses that are too small to be an established exchange and probably represent a crime service that exchanges the cryptocurrency for local currency or another digital currency," the researchers explain.</p>

One of the largest transactions involving a Ryuk wallet found during this investigation was above \$5 million (365 bitcoins), the researchers said in their [report](#). This is not the highest ransom paid to Ryuk, though.

In a previous report, Advanced Intelligence said that the [largest payment](#) confirmed to these attackers was 2,200 BTC, which converted to \$34 million at the time. The average ransom value received by the group is 48 bitcoins.

Escaping ID verification

Cashing out the ransom money in fiat currency is not a simple process but Ryuk set up a circuit that allows them to handle millions despite security researchers and law enforcement keeping a close eye on the operation.

The conversion from cryptocurrency is essential in identifying the criminals because reputable exchanges require personal documents before transferring the money to a bank account.

However, it is unclear how strict this verification is in the case of Huobi and Binance.

Ryuk ransomware has been active for more than two years and left behind a long list of victims. It is a tight enterprise that leaves little clues about its actions and profits.

Attacks from this threat actor focused mostly on organizations in the [healthcare sector](#) come November 2020, adding to the pressure from the pandemic. In the third quarter last year, the attackers were hitting, on average, [20 companies every week](#).

Considering the actor's reputation of a tough negotiator that does not budge an inch regardless of the victim's profile or financial difficulties, the \$150 million revenue estimation is likely conservative. Obviously, the entire operation comes with some costs.

Another highly profitable ransomware gang is REvil (Sodinokibi), who announced through a public-facing representative that they [made \\$100 million](#) in one year from extorting victims. They said that the goal was to make \$2 billion.

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HEADLINE	01/07 State Dept. creates cybersecurity agency
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities---threats/state-dept-to-create-new-cybersecurity-and-technology-agency/d/d-id/1339853
GIST	<p>The US State Department plans to stand up a new agency to lead US diplomatic efforts in cybersecurity and emerging technology. The formation of the new Bureau of Cyberspace Security and Emerging Technologies (CSET) was officially given the green light by State Department Secretary Mike Pompeo to move forward, according to a State Department announcement this week.</p> <p>"The need to reorganize and resource America's cyberspace and emerging technology security diplomacy through the creation of CSET is critical, as the challenges to U.S. national security presented by China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and other cyber and emerging technology competitors and adversaries have only increased since the Department notified Congress in June 2019 of its intent to create CSET," the State Department said in its release.</p> <p>CSET will head US diplomacy in global cyberspace security and new technologies for securing critical infrastructure, reducing cyber conflict, and competing in cyberspace.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Bitcoin crosses \$40,000; doubles in month
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/bitcoin-crosses-40k-mark-doubling-month-75119174
GIST	<p>CHARLOTTE, N.C. -- First it went through \$20,000. Then 10 days later, it broke through \$25,000, and then, with barely taking a breath, it crossed \$30,000. Now only a few days into 2021, the price of bitcoin has crossed \$40,000.</p> <p>Nothing's new with the digital currency in the month since it crossed \$20,000 — there's been no major change in how it can be used. Although some investors are now using the notoriously volatile currency as a “store of value,” which is traditionally a title saved for safe haven investments like gold and other precious metals.</p> <p>“Will you be able to buy a cup of coffee with bitcoin? Probably not with the current version of Bitcoin. It’s largely become a store of value,” said Mike Venuto, a co-portfolio manager of the Amplify Transformational Data Sharing ETF, a \$391 million exchanged-traded fund that focuses on blockchain technologies and companies that deal with cryptocurrencies.</p> <p>Media attention to its rise has only added fuel to the rally. But investors in digital currencies and companies that trade or “mine” them are warning people to be skeptical of Bitcoin's recent rise and to be braced for a lot of volatility.</p> <p>It's been a wild ride for bitcoin the last three years. The digital currency made its big Wall Street debut in December 2017, when the major futures exchanges rolled out bitcoin futures. The attention drove Bitcoin to roughly \$19,300, a then-unheard of price for the currency.</p> <p>Then it all evaporated. The currency's value plunged sharply in 2018, and by December of that year Bitcoin was worth less than \$4,000 a coin. Up until this most recent rally which started in October, Bitcoin generally floated between \$5,000 and \$10,000.</p> <p>While in the last two years companies have embraced the technology that underlies digital currencies like Bitcoin, a concept known as the blockchain, the actual uses for Bitcoin have not really changed since its rally three years ago. It's still largely used by those distrustful of the banking system, criminals seeking to launder money, and for the most part, as a store of value.</p> <p>In fact, other investments typically used as safe havens during uncertain times — notable precious metals — have been trading at near record highs as well.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	01/08 Pakistan court jails militant leader 5yrs
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/pakistani-court-sentences-militant-leader-years-jail-75128750
GIST	<p>MULTAN, Pakistan -- A Pakistani court on Friday convicted and sentenced a senior militant leader to five years in jail in a case of terror financing, the country's counter-terrorism department in the eastern Punjab province said.</p> <p>The court ruling comes after authorities arrested Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, an alleged leader of the militant group that was behind the bloody 2008 Mumbai attacks in India. But he was sentenced in another case.</p> <p>According to Punjab Counter-Terrorism Department, Lakhvi was fined 100,000 Pakistani rupees (\$622) by the court in Lahore, the capital of Punjab province. Lakhvi was accused of running a dispensary in Lahore as a front for financing militant activities.</p>

	<p>Lakhvi is alleged to be a leader of the Lashker-e-Taiba group that organized the Mumbai attacks in 2008 that killed 166 people. He was arrested after Mumbai attacks but released in 2015 by Pakistani courts.</p> <p>Pakistan and India have a history of bitter relations. Since gaining independence in 1947, the two nuclear rivals have fought three wars, two of them over Kashmir, which is split between them and claimed by both.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Afghanistan officials: attacks kill 23
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/officials-attacks-southern-afghanistan-kill-11-75105917
GIST	<p>KABUL, Afghanistan -- Attacks in Afghanistan left at least 23 civilians and security forces dead, officials said Thursday, even as Afghan negotiators were in Qatar to resume talks with the Taliban aimed at finding an end to decades of conflict.</p> <p>In southern Uruzgan province, a suicide car bomber detonated a vehicle full of explosives early Thursday near a military base, killing six security forces, said a provincial council member who was not authorized to speak with the media.</p> <p>Mohammad Karim Karimi, deputy head of the provincial council in Uruzgan, confirmed the attack on the military base in Tirin Kot, the provincial capital, but couldn't provide an exact death toll. He said the explosion was so strong it sent shock waves through the city.</p> <p>In southern Helmand province, at least five civilians were killed and five others wounded in a suspected airstrike late Wednesday on the outskirts of Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital, according to Attaullah Afghan, head of the provincial council. He said the casualties included children and women.</p> <p>Abdul Nabi Elham, provincial governor, said officials were investigating to determine whether the assault was an airstrike or some other type of attack.</p> <p>No one immediately claimed responsibility for either attack.</p> <p>In northern Kunduz province, Taliban fighters stormed a military checkpoint killing at least 12 security personnel, said a provincial official who was not authorized to speak with the media.</p> <p>He said about 10 other security forces were missing and may have been taken into custody by the Taliban during the attack. The official said reinforcements were dispatched to the area outside the provincial capital Kunduz.</p> <p>Two military vehicles were destroyed and weapons and ammunition from the checkpoint were seized by the insurgents, he added.</p> <p>Inamuddin Rahmani, spokesman for the provincial police chief in Kunduz, confirmed the Taliban attack.</p> <p>Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, claimed responsibility for the attack and said Taliban fighters killed around 15 security forces and arrested 11 others.</p> <p>Mujahid said seven security forces were killed at the checkpoint and eight others from reinforcement units were also killed.</p> <p>An Afghan negotiating team is in Qatar's capital of Doha to resume talks aimed at finding an end to decades of relentless conflict even as violence has spiked across the country. The stop-and-go talks come amid growing doubt over a U.S.-Taliban peace deal brokered by outgoing President Donald Trump.</p>

HEADLINE	01/07 Cleric who inspired extremists out of prison
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/indonesian-cleric-inspired-extremists-freed-prison-75122044
GIST	<p>JAKARTA, Indonesia -- A convicted firebrand cleric who inspired the Bali bombers and other violent extremists walked free from an Indonesian prison Friday after completing his sentence for funding the training of Islamic militants.</p> <p>Police said they would continue to monitor the activities of Abu Bakar Bashir, who is now 82 and ailing, and his son said Bashir for now would be avoiding activities outside his family due to the coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>Bashir was imprisoned in 2011 for his links to a militant training camp in the religiously conservative Aceh province. He was convicted of funding the military-style camp to train Islamic militants and sentenced to 15 years in jail.</p> <p>Bashir has accumulated 55 months of sentence reductions, which are often granted to prisoners on major holidays, such as Independence Day, religious holiday exemptions and illness, said Rika Aprianti, the spokesperson for the corrections department at the Justice Ministry.</p> <p>"He is released as his sentence ends and expires," Aprianti said, adding that her ministry had close cooperation with the National Police's counterterrorism squad and the National Counterterrorism Agency to provide security during the cleric's release.</p> <p>Bashir, wearing a white robe and mask, was escorted by members of the police anti-terrorism squad known as Densus 88 and left in a car waiting at dawn outside the Gunung Sindur prison in West Java's Bogor town, Bashir's son, Abdul Rohim, told The Associated Press.</p> <p>He said the family, lawyers and a medical team accompanied Bashir, who returned to his home in Central Java's Solo city, about 538 kilometers (334 miles) east of the capital, Jakarta. An ambulance also followed the entourage.</p> <p>National Police spokesperson Ahmad Ramadhan said the police would continue to monitor Bashir's activities.</p> <p>"I just want to keep my father from crowds during the coronavirus pandemic," Rohim said. "He will only rest and gather with his family until the outbreak ends, there will be no other activities of him for sure."</p> <p>The slender, white-bearded Bashir, an Indonesian of Yemeni descent, was the spiritual leader of the al-Qaida-linked Jemaah Islamiyah network behind the 2002 bombings on the tourist island of Bali that killed 202 people, mostly foreign tourists, including 88 Australians, leaving a deep scar on that country.</p> <p>Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison described Bashir's release as "gut wrenching," and said the government had long called for tougher sentences against those behind the bombings and raised concerns with Jakarta that individuals must be prevented from inciting such behavior.</p> <p>"Decisions on sentencing... as we know, are matters for the Indonesian justice system and we have to respect the decisions that they take," Morrison told reporters Friday.</p> <p>He said that while Bashir's release was consistent with the Indonesian justice system, "That doesn't make it any easier for any Australian to accept that... ultimately, those who are responsible for the murder of Australians would now be free. It's sometimes not a fair world. And that's one of the hardest things to deal with."</p>

Indonesian authorities had struggled to prove Bashir's involvement in the Bali bombings and fought multiple battles to uphold convictions on other charges. Prosecutors were unable to prove a string of terrorism-related allegations, a treason conviction was overturned, and a sentence for a document forgery conviction was considered light.

Upon release from prison in 2004, he was arrested and again charged with heading Jemaah Islamiyah as well as giving his blessing to the Bali bombings. A court cleared him of heading JI but sentenced him to 30 months for conspiracy in the Bali bombings.

After his release in 2006, he resumed teaching at the Al-Mukmin school in his hometown, Solo in Central Java, and traveled the country giving fiery sermons.

The Al-Mukmin Islamic boarding school he founded with Abdullah Sungkar in 1972 became a militant production line under Bashir's influence, radicalizing a generation of students. Many of them would later terrorize Indonesia with bombings and attacks that aimed to bring about an Islamic caliphate and battered the country's reputation for tolerance.

In speeches, Bashir said al-Qaida founder Osama bin Laden and three militants sentenced to death for the Bali bombings were not terrorists but "soldiers in Allah's army."

A court banned Jemaah Islamiyah in 2008, and the group was weakened by a sustained crackdown on militants by Indonesia's counterterrorism police with U.S. and Australian support.

The 2010 raid on the camp that Bashir helped fund was a crushing blow to radical networks in Indonesia and forced changes in the mission of Islamic extremists. Instead of targeting Western people and symbols, the militants targeted Indonesians who were deemed "infidels" such as police, anti-terrorism squads, lawmakers and others who were seen as obstacles to transforming the secular country into an Islamic state governed by Sharia law. More recently, the militants have been inspired by Islamic State group attacks abroad.

Sidney Jones, director of the Jakarta-based Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, which closely monitors Southeast Asia's Muslim militant groups, said Bashir's release will not increase the risk of terrorism in Indonesia as many would-be terrorists today are too young to remember JI's bombing campaign that took place while Bashir was its leader.

"Extremist cells are far more fractured than they were when Bashir went into prisons," she said, adding that Bashir has not written anything that could be used as teaching materials for radical groups.

"Moreover, with the government crackdown on 'radicals,' I doubt Bashir is going to have much room for radical preaching, even if he wanted to," Jones said.

Bashir was transferred from isolation on a prison island to Gunung Sindur prison in 2016 for age and health reasons and has been in the hospital several times due to his deteriorating health.

President Joko Widodo almost granted a request for early release in 2019 on humanitarian grounds but reversed himself after protests from the Australian government as well as from relatives of the Bali bombings victims.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	01/07 Gov. questions WSP; breaching of fence
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SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/inslee-questions-how-nearly-100-people-breached-fencing-at-governors-mansion
GIST	<p>Washington's Governor is questioning how nearly 100 people were able to breach fencing and make it as far as the front door of the Governor's Mansion on the Capitol Campus on Wednesday.</p> <p>Governor Jay Inslee revealed Thursday he and his wife were inside the residence when the breach occurred.</p> <p>"I was at the residence and I felt that there was good security at the building," Inslee said during a press briefing about the upcoming legislative session. "There was a lone cadet at the gate, he did an admirable job given the circumstances."</p> <p>It's the State Patrol's job to provide 24/7 security for the Governor and the Governor's Mansion which is encircled by steel fencing.</p> <p>Video taken during Wednesday showed protesters shaking the pedestrian gate adjacent to the main driveway into the grounds when the gate opens. People began walking unabated onto the grounds.</p> <p>The House Republican leader watched from his office window 50 yards away.</p> <p>"They were on the porch," said Representative J.T. Wilcox. "The crowd wasn't intending violence because it would have been easy to penetrate, and I'm very thankful for that".</p> <p>Inslee said he will be discussing security measures with Washington State Patrol Chief John Batiste on Thursday.</p> <p>"I'm disappointed in this situation we are going to find out why it happened and how it happened," Inslee said.</p> <p>A State Patrol spokesman said the department is investigating.</p> <p>"We weren't expecting that," said Sergeant Darren Wright. "We were somewhat prepared, but we could do better and we are evaluating our situation and our tactics."</p> <p>It's not uncommon for people to march to the fencing surrounding the Governor's mansion following rallies at the Capitol steps 200 yards away.</p> <p>"This group showed no indication they would do that, they were peaceful up to that point," Wright said.</p> <p>When asked if protesters carrying brandishing weapons plays a role in how WSP handles ground crowd control in front of the mansion, Wright said "what changes is our actions, is their actions."</p> <p>"If someone was carrying a rifle but they are not being aggressive or intimidating or threatening with that, then it's not an issue," Wright said. "If someone is carrying a stick and swinging it at us in a violent manner and wielding it in a manner that's a weapon, then we will react to that."</p> <p>Washington is an open carry state where people can carry a weapon on their person if it's visible. At Wednesday's rally, weapons were seen in the crowd.</p> <p>Many on social media criticized the double standard when it came to WSP's response to the summer protests that involved the Black Lives Matter movement.</p> <p>Video capture at a Aug. 22 rally in front of the Governor's Mansion showed a squad of WSP officers in riot gear.</p> <p>"We had no intelligence that yesterday's crowd would do what they did," Wright said.</p>

	<p>He said the WSP is increasing its presence at the Mansion.</p> <p>“We will have a seen and unseen presence,” Wright said. “Beyond that, we are not really going to discuss specifics on security plans.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Alaska Airlines chaos on flight
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/14-passengers-could-be-placed-alaska-airlines-no-fly-list-after-chaos-aboard-flight/5E3NJ43VZF AFLIGL2J5D2M3KZE/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — At least 14 passengers could be placed on Alaska Airlines’ no-fly list for refusing to wear a mask, being rowdy and argumentative and continuing to harass crew members on a flight on Thursday night from Dulles International Airport to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, an airline spokesperson said.</p> <p>The airline stated their behavior was “unacceptable,” and the airline also apologized to other passengers who were uncomfortable during the flight.</p> <p>As far as the ban goes, the airline stated the passengers could face the possibility of not being able to fly on the airline in the future.</p> <p>Airline officials said, “We will not tolerate any disturbance onboard our aircraft or at any of the airports we serve.”</p> <p>Perry Cooper, a spokesman for SEA Airport, said Port of Seattle police were called on “civil standby” just in case something occurred. However, when the flight arrived, they were not involved.</p> <p>Cooper said law enforcement did not speak to anyone on Flight 1085 from Dulles because Alaska Airlines handled the situation.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Researchers: 2020 ties hottest year record
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/08/climate/global-temperatures-record.html?action=click&module=Latest&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>Last year effectively tied 2016 as the hottest year on record, European climate researchers announced Friday, as global temperatures continued their relentless rise brought on by the emission of heat-trapping greenhouse gases.</p> <p>The record warmth — which fueled deadly heat waves, droughts, intense wildfires and other environmental disasters around the world in 2020 — occurred despite the development in the second half of the year of La Niña, a global climate phenomenon marked by surface cooling across much of the equatorial Pacific Ocean.</p> <p>And while 2020 may tie the record, all of the last six years are among the hottest ever, said Freja Vamborg, a senior scientist with the Copernicus Climate Change Service.</p> <p>“It’s a reminder that temperatures are changing and will continue to change if we don’t cut greenhouse gas emissions,” Dr. Vamborg said.</p> <p>According to Copernicus, a program of the European Union, the global average temperature in 2020 was 1.25 degrees Celsius (about 2.25 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than the average from 1850 to 1900, before</p>

the rise of emissions from spreading industrialization. The 2020 average was very slightly lower than the average in 2016, too small a difference to be significant.

Some regions experienced exceptional warming. For the second year in a row, Europe had its warmest year ever, and [suffered from deadly heat waves](#). But the temperature difference between 2020 and 2019 was striking: 2020 was 0.4 degrees Celsius, or nearly three-quarters of a degree Fahrenheit, warmer.

While not quite as drastic as in Europe, temperatures across North America were above average as well. The warming played a critical role in [widespread drought](#) that affected most of the western half of the United States and [intense wildfires](#) that ravaged California and Colorado.

The Arctic is warming much faster than elsewhere, a characteristic that was reflected in the 2020 numbers. Average temperatures in some parts of the Arctic were more than 6 degrees Celsius higher last year than a baseline average from 1981 to 2010. Europe, by contrast, was 1.6 degrees Celsius higher last year than the same baseline.

In the Arctic, and especially in parts of Siberia, abnormally warm conditions persisted through most of the year. The heat led to drying of vegetation that in Siberia helped fuel one of the most [intensive wildfire seasons in history](#).

Parts of the Southern Hemisphere experienced lower than average temperatures, possibly as a result of the arrival of La Niña conditions in the second half of 2020.

Dr. Vamborg said that it is difficult to attribute any temperature differences directly to La Niña, but the cooling effect of the phenomenon may be why December 2020, when La Niña was strengthening, was only the sixth warmest December ever, while most of the other months of the year were in the top three.

Zeke Hausfather, a research scientist at [Berkeley Earth](#), an independent research group in California, said the greatest effect of La Niña on global temperatures tends to come several months after conditions peak in the Pacific. “So while certainly La Niña had some cooling effect in the last few months, it’s likely going to have a bigger impact on 2021 temperatures,” he said.

Dr. Hausfather said it was striking that 2020 matched 2016, [because that year’s record warmth was fueled by El Niño](#). El Niño is essentially the opposite of La Niña, when surface warming in the Pacific tends to supercharge global temperatures.

So 2020 and 2016 being equally warm, Dr. Hausfather said, means that the last five years of global warming have had a cumulative effect that is about the same as El Niño.

Berkeley Earth will release its own analysis of 2020 global temperatures later this month, as will the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and NASA. The three analyses take a similar approach, essentially compiling thousands of temperature measurements worldwide.

Copernicus employs a technique called re-analysis, which uses fewer temperature measurements but adds other weather data like air pressure, and feeds it all into a computer model to come up with its temperature averages.

Despite the differences, the results of the analyses tend to be very similar.

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HEADLINE	01/07 Climate change turning cities into ovens
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/climate-change-is-turning-cities-into-ovens/
GIST	WHICHEVER SIDE OF the subjective city-versus-rural debate you’re on, the objective laws of thermodynamics dictate that cities lose on at least one front: They tend to get insufferably hotter, more

so than surrounding rural areas. That's thanks to the urban heat-island effect, in which buildings and roads readily absorb the sun's energy and release it well into the night. The greenery of rural areas, by contrast, provides shade and cools the air by releasing water.

Climate change is making the urban heat-island effect [all the more dire](#) in cities across the world, and it's only going to get worse. Like, way worse. An international team of researchers has used a new modeling technique to estimate that by the year 2100, the world's cities could warm by as much as 4.4 degrees Celsius on average. For perspective, that figure obliterates the [Paris agreement's optimistic goal](#) for a *global* average temperature rise of 1.5 degrees C from preindustrial levels. In fact, the team's figure more than doubles the agreement's hard goal of limiting that global rise to no more than 2 degrees C.

Up until this point, global climate models have tended to snub urban areas, and for good reason, as they make up just 3 percent of the planet's land surface. Cities are but a blip. Researchers are more interested in the dynamics of things like the ocean, ice, and air currents. "We're closing this kind of gap," says Lei Zhao, a climate scientist at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and lead author on a recent [paper](#) published in *Nature Climate Change* describing the modeling. "We provide urban-specific projections for the future."

His team's model suggests that hotter cities could be catastrophic for urban public health, which is already suffering from the effects of increasing heat. Between 2000 and 2016, according to the [World Health Organization](#), the number of people exposed to heat waves jumped by 125 million, and extreme heat claimed more than 166,000 lives between 1998 and 2017. And while at the moment half the world's population lives in urban areas, that proportion is expected to rise to 70 percent by 2050, according to the authors of this new paper. People in search of economic opportunity are unknowingly rushing into peril.

"When I read these papers, I just don't know what's wrong with humanity, to be honest with you. Because this is like the same song being sung by different people," says climate scientist Camilo Mora of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, who wasn't involved in the work. "Come on, man! When are we going to get serious about this problem? This is another person ringing the bell. We just for some reason refuse to hear this thing."

To calculate how much city temperatures might rise, Zhao and his colleagues from a number of institutions, including Princeton University and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, built a statistical model for the climate of urban regions, focusing on changing temperatures and humidities. These two factors are the conspiring menaces of extreme heat: Our bodies respond to high temperatures by perspiring, which is more fancily known as evaporative cooling. But humidity makes this process less efficient, because the more moist the air is, the less readily it accepts evaporating sweat from our bodies. That's why humid heat feels so much more uncomfortable than dry heat.

Heat and humidity are not only uncomfortable; they can be dangerous. Mora has identified [27 ways heat can kill a person](#). When your body detects that it's overheating, it redirects blood from the organs at your core to your skin, thus dissipating more heat into the air around you. (This is why your skin turns red when you're hot.) In extreme heat, this can spiral out of control, resulting in ischemia, or the critically low flow of blood to the organs. This can damage crucial organs like the brain or heart. In addition, a high body temperature can cause cell death, known as heat cytotoxicity. Humidity [compounds the risk](#) of overheating and organ failure, since you can't sweat as efficiently to cool down.

Extreme heat can harm healthy people, and those with heart or respiratory conditions like asthma are particularly vulnerable. Children are also at particular risk because of the thermodynamics of their bodies; their small size means that they both heat up and cool down faster. When he teaches his students, Mora uses the analogy of trying to cook a large potato—even one that is heated for a long time can remain cold in the middle. But if you want to heat it up faster, just slice it in half. "You double the area for exposing the potato to the heat so that it can get to the core of the potato easier. What you have done is change the ratio of volume to area," he says. "That's exactly what happens with children. In

adults, we can cope with the heat better because not only do we have an insulation barrier, the heat will take a longer time to get to the core." On the other hand, he continues, for children "the heat that is there is pretty much all the way down to their core."

Mora likens the simultaneous risks of climate change and the heat-island effect to having to battle two foes at once. "Dealing with climate change is like getting into a fight with Mike Tyson," he says. "With the heat-island effect that these guys just documented here, that is now like bringing Jackie Chan on top of Mike Tyson. So now you gotta face those two guys—there is just no way for people to cope with this."

To model how these two forces might affect cities, Zhao and his team turned their statistical model into an "emulator," which mimics complex climate models, but focuses on urban areas. They could then apply the emulator to results from over two dozen *global* climate models, assuming either intermediate or high emission levels going forward, to translate coarse climate model outputs to the city level. When they assumed an intermediate level of emissions, they found that, on average, the planet's urban regions could warm 1.9 degrees C over the next 80 years; when they assumed a high level, the figure became an astonishing 4.4 degrees C.

Overall, it's bad news no matter where a city-dweller lives, but urban areas will be affected in different ways. For instance, the modeling found that the northern United States, particularly the upper Midwest, will warm more than the southern US. When it comes to relative humidity, inland cities around the world will tend to dry, while coastal cities will stay wetter—which makes good sense, given that they're next to water.

Humanity can, though, brace its urban areas for the brutal heat that climate change is already delivering—by making them more *rural*. Greening public spaces both beautifies them and provides people with shade. Each tree's leaves also act like tiny air conditioners, releasing moisture to cool the environment. And the less the pavement is exposed to the sun, the less the built environment will absorb its energy.

With the [arrival of the Biden administration](#), the US could even [revive the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps](#), putting people back to work greening up cities. That'll be especially critical in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods, which tend to be less green and thus more likely to suffer from the heat-island effect, a consequence of [racist housing policies](#).

Plus, says Elizabeth Sawin, codirector of Climate Interactive, a nonprofit that focuses on the intersection of climate change and inequity, greening creates jobs. You need people to grow the trees in a nursery, and then others to plant and maintain them, for instance. "Particularly when that can be done in partnership with the communities, there's a real opportunity to train people in new skills," she says. "Those would be investments that really would help cities adapt to the climate change we can't prevent."

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HEADLINE	01/07 Common symptom: loss of smell, taste
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/jan/7/nearly-86-covid-19-patients-experienced-loss-smell/
GIST	<p>One of the most common symptoms among COVID-19 symptoms was the loss of smell and taste, and it took patients on average three weeks to recover these senses, according to a recent study published this week.</p> <p>The loss of smell and taste, known as olfactory dysfunction, was reported in nearly 86% of patients with a mild form of the coronavirus disease. Only 4.5% to 6.9% of people with moderate-to-severe forms of disease experienced these symptoms, the study published in the Journal of Internal Medicine found.</p>

	<p>“Olfactory dysfunction is more prevalent in mild COVID-19 forms than in moderate-to-critical forms, and 95% of patients recover their sense of smell at 6-months post-infection,” said lead author Dr. Jerome R. Lechien of Paris Saclay University.</p> <p>Olfactory dysfunction lasted about 21 days, plus or minus 18 days. Out of the 1,916 patients with loss of taste and smell, 328 of them or 24% did not recover these senses 60 days after the onset of these symptoms.</p> <p>The study included 2,581 COVID-19 patients from 18 European hospitals. The researchers identified loss of taste and smell in 54.7% of mild cases of coronavirus and 36.6% in moderate-to-severe cases. At 60 days and 6 months, 15.3% and 4.7%, respectively, did not recover their sense of taste and smell.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Disaster costs doubled in 2020
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/climate/2020-disaster-costs.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=Climate%20and%20Environment
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Hurricanes, wildfires and other disasters across the United States caused \$95 billion in damage last year, according to new data, almost double the amount in 2019 and the third-highest losses since 2010.</p> <p>The new figures, reported Thursday morning by Munich Re, a company that provides insurance to other insurance companies, are the latest signal of the growing cost of climate change. They reflect a year marked by a record number of named Atlantic storms, as well as the largest wildfires ever recorded in California.</p> <p>Those losses occurred during a year that was one of the warmest on record, a trend that makes extreme rainfall, wildfires, droughts and other environmental catastrophes more frequent and intense.</p> <p>“Climate change plays a role in this upward trend of losses,” Ernst Rauch, the chief climate scientist at Munich Re, said in an interview. He said continued building in high-risk areas had also contributed to the growing losses.</p> <p>Topping the list was Hurricane Laura, which caused \$13 billion in damage when it struck Southwestern Louisiana in late August. Laura was one of the year’s record number of 30 named storms in 2020; 12 of those storms made landfall, another record. The storms caused \$43 billion in losses, almost half the total for all U.S. disasters last year.</p> <p>In addition to the number of storms, the 2020 hurricane season was unusually devastating because climate change is making storms more likely to stall once they hit land, pumping more rain and wind into coastal towns and cities for longer periods of time, Mr. Rauch said.</p> <p>The next costliest category of natural disasters was convective storms, which includes thunderstorms, tornadoes, hailstorms and derechos, and caused \$40 billion in losses last year. The derecho that struck Iowa and other Midwestern states in August caused almost \$7 billion in damage, destroying huge amounts of corn and soybean crops.</p> <p>Wildfires caused another \$16 billion in losses. Last year’s wildfires stood out not just because of the numbers of acres burned or houses destroyed, Munich Re said, but also because so much of that damage was outside of California. Some 4,000 homes were damaged or destroyed in Oregon alone.</p> <p>The new numbers come as the insurance industry struggles to adjust to the effects of climate change. In California, officials have tried a series of rule changes designed to stop insurers from pulling out of fire-prone areas, leaving homeowners with few options for insurance.</p>

	<p>Homeowners and governments around the United States need to do a better job of making buildings and communities more resilient to natural disasters, said Donald L. Griffin, a vice president at the American Property Casualty Insurance Association, which represents insurance companies.</p> <p>“We can’t, as an industry, continue to just collect more and more money, and rebuild and rebuild and rebuild in the same way,” Mr. Griffin said in an interview. “We’ve got to place an emphasis on preventing and reducing loss.”</p> <p>The data also shows another worrying trend: The lack of insurance coverage in developing countries, which makes it harder for people there to recover after a disaster.</p> <p>The single costliest disaster of 2020 was a series of floods that hit China last summer, which according to Munich Re caused \$17 billion worth of damage. Only 2 percent of those losses were insured, the company said.</p> <p>Similarly, Cyclone Amphan, which struck India and Bangladesh in May, caused \$14 billion of damage, “very little of which was insured,” according to Munich Re. Of the \$67 billion in losses from natural disasters across Asia last year, only \$3 billion, or 4.5 percent, was covered by insurance.</p> <p>Without insurance, Mr. Rauch said, “the opportunity to recover fast after such an event is simply not there.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Now it can be told: Pentagon Papers
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/us/pentagon-papers-neil-sheehan.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>There was one story Neil Sheehan chose not to tell. It was the story of how he had obtained the Pentagon Papers, the blockbuster scoop that led to a 1971 showdown between the Nixon administration and the press, and to a Supreme Court ruling that is still seen as a milepost in government-press relations.</p> <p>From the moment he secured the 7,000 pages of classified government documents on the Vietnam War for The New York Times, until his death on Thursday, Mr. Sheehan, a former Vietnam War correspondent and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, declined nearly every invitation to explain precisely how he had pulled it off.</p> <p>In 2015, however, at a reporter’s request, he agreed to tell his story on the condition that it not be published while he was alive. Beset by scoliosis and Parkinson’s disease, he recounted, in a four-hour interview at his home in Washington, a tale as suspenseful and cinematic as anyone in Hollywood might concoct.</p> <p>The Pentagon Papers, arguably the greatest journalistic catch of a generation, were a secret history of United States decision-making on Vietnam, commissioned in 1967 by the secretary of defense. Their release revealed for the first time the extent to which successive White House administrations had intensified American involvement in the war while hiding their own doubts about the chances of success.</p> <p>Recounting the steps that led to his breaking the story, Mr. Sheehan told of aliases scribbled into the guest registers of Massachusetts motels; copy-shop machines crashing under the burden of an all-night, purloined-document load; photocopied pages stashed in a bus-station locker; bundles belted into a seat on a flight from Boston; and telltale initials incinerated in a diplomat’s barbecue set.</p> <p>He also revealed that he had defied the explicit instructions of his confidential source, whom others later identified as Daniel Ellsberg, a former Defense Department analyst who had been a contributor to the secret history while working for the Rand Corporation. In 1969, Mr. Ellsberg had illicitly copied the entire report, hoping that making it public would hasten an end to a war he had come passionately to oppose.</p>

Contrary to what is generally believed, Mr. Ellsberg never “gave” the papers to The Times, Mr. Sheehan emphatically said. Mr. Ellsberg told Mr. Sheehan that he could read them but not make copies. So Mr. Sheehan smuggled the papers out of the apartment in Cambridge, Mass., where Mr. Ellsberg had stashed them; then he copied them illicitly, just as Mr. Ellsberg had done, and took them to The Times.

Over the next two months, he strung Mr. Ellsberg along. He told him that his editors were deliberating about how best to present the material, and he professed to have been sidetracked by other assignments. In fact, he was holed up in a hotel room in midtown Manhattan with the documents and a rapidly expanding team of Times editors and reporters working feverishly toward publication.

The publication of the first installment of the Pentagon papers on June 13, 1971, blindsided Mr. Ellsberg. He learned it was imminent from another Times staff member, Anthony Austin, with whom he had secretly shared an excerpt months before. Mr. Austin had chosen not to mention the bombshell to anyone at the newspaper, preferring to keep it for a book he was writing about the war.

When Mr. Austin discovered that his own newspaper was about to scoop his scoop, he called Mr. Ellsberg in a panic. Mr. Ellsberg tried to reach Mr. Sheehan, who was on deadline writing a subsequent installment. Mr. Sheehan ignored Mr. Ellsberg’s messages until he knew it would be too late in the press run to intervene. He asked an editor to let him know when 10,000 copies had been printed.

“You had to do what I did,” Mr. Sheehan said in the 2015 interview, justifying his deception of Mr. Ellsberg, whom he described as torn between his desire to make the papers public and his fear of being sent to prison. In his efforts to protect himself, Mr. Sheehan said, Mr. Ellsberg was behaving recklessly. Mr. Sheehan feared that Mr. Ellsberg would inadvertently tip someone off. “It was just luck that he didn’t get the whistle blown on the whole damn thing,” he said.

Fearing Prison

Mr. Ellsberg had been a source for Mr. Sheehan before. So on a visit to Washington in March 1971, Mr. Ellsberg called him and asked to spend the night at his house. During a long night of talking, the two men made a deal. As Mr. Sheehan told it, Mr. Ellsberg would give him the papers; and, if The Times agreed to publish them, the newspaper would do its best to protect the identity of its source.

But when Mr. Sheehan arrived in Cambridge intending to collect the documents, he recalled, Mr. Ellsberg had changed his mind. He told Mr. Sheehan he could read them but make no copies — because, as Mr. Sheehan described it, “once he turned loose of it, The Times would assume ownership of it, and they’d do what they wanted with it.”

“He’d lose control.”

In his 2002 memoir, “Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers,” Mr. Ellsberg wrote that he was skeptical that The Times would publish the documents in full, as he had wanted. He feared, too, he added, that if he handed over the papers before The Times had committed to publishing, someone there would inform the Federal Bureau of Investigation, “or the bureau would somehow get wind of it and come after my other copies.”

To Mr. Sheehan, however, it seemed that Mr. Ellsberg’s reservations were “about going to jail.”

“Because when The Times got it,” he said, “The Times would go ahead with it. And when it came out, he might get caught. And he didn’t have a politician yet to protect him.”

He was, Mr. Sheehan said, “totally conflicted.”

Mr. Ellsberg was also taking serious risks, Mr. Sheehan said. He had made multiple copies and had paid carelessly with personal checks. He had approached members of Congress about holding hearings. “There’s no way The Times can protect this guy,” Mr. Sheehan remembered thinking. His ostensibly secret source had “left tracks on the ceiling, on the walls, everywhere,” he said.

“Sooner or later, I was afraid he was going to run into a politician who’d go right to the Justice Department,” Mr. Sheehan said. That person would get on the phone to the attorney general “and say, ‘Hey, The New York Times has got some kind of big secret study, they got it from Dan Ellsberg.’ ”

Mr. Sheehan realized, he said, that he had to move fast. Once word leaked out, the government would go to court to block publication. Lawyers for The Times would end up arguing with the Justice Department over classified material, the importance of which neither the judge nor the public would be in a position to understand.

“Oh, I felt really quite angry,” Mr. Sheehan recalled. Like Mr. Ellsberg, he had turned against the war and intended to do what he could to stop it. “So I was quite upset when Ellsberg said, ‘You can read, take notes, but no copies,’ ” he remembered. “And over the fact that he was out of control.”

He made up his mind, he said, “that this material is never again going in a government safe.”

Back in Washington, he confided in his wife, Susan Sheehan, a writer for The New Yorker. He recalled her saying, “If I were you, I’d get control of that situation.” Play along with Mr. Ellsberg, do your best to protect him, but get the material to The Times.

“Xerox it,” he remembered Ms. Sheehan saying.

He returned to Cambridge to continue reading and taking notes. When Mr. Ellsberg let it be known that he was leaving on a brief vacation, Mr. Sheehan asked to continue working in the apartment where the documents were kept. Mr. Ellsberg agreed and gave him a key. He reminded Mr. Sheehan: No copies.

Mr. Sheehan said nothing.

“I’d known Ellsberg for a long time, and he thought I was operating under the same rules that one normally used: Source controls the material,” Mr. Sheehan said. “He didn’t realize that I had decided: ‘This guy is just impossible. You can’t leave it in his hands. It’s too important and it’s too dangerous.’ ”

Long Night in a Copy Shop

When it was clear that Mr. Ellsberg was leaving, Mr. Sheehan called home. “Come up,” he told his wife. “I need your help.” He told her to bring suitcases, large envelopes and all the cash in the house. She flew to Boston and checked into a hotel under a false name. Mr. Sheehan was in a motor inn, under yet another name.

From the Times bureau chief in Boston, he got the name of a copy shop that could handle thousands of pages. He asked the bureau chief to get him several hundred dollars in expense money for a secret project he declined to explain. When the bureau chief called the Times newsroom and reached the editors on duty that night, they declined the request. So he called the national editor at home.

“Give it to him,” the editor said, according to Mr. Sheehan. No questions asked.

Mr. Sheehan duplicated the apartment key in case he lost the original. Then he began copying the seven thousand pages — first in a real estate office where an acquaintance worked, then, with Ms. Sheehan’s help, in the suburban copy shop. He was ferrying piles of pages by taxi between the apartment and the copy shop, then to a locker in the Boston bus terminal and later to a locker at Logan airport.

When the machines in the copy shop crashed under the strain, the Sheehans relocated to a copy shop in Boston run by a Navy veteran. When the man noticed that the documents were classified, and became nervous, Ms. Sheehan, at the shop, called her husband at the apartment.

“Get down here,” he remembered her saying.

He rushed back and told the manager that he had borrowed the material from some Harvard professors. They were using them for a study, he said, and had put a time limit on the loan. The documents, he assured the manager, had been declassified in bulk. The manager, being ex-Navy, seemed to understand.

At the airport, the Sheehans bought an extra seat on their flight home and piled their suitcases onto it, buckling them in rather than letting them out of their sight.

Back in Washington, Mr. Sheehan's editor, with sample documents and a memo from Mr. Sheehan, set off for New York to get approval for Mr. Sheehan to proceed.

Mr. Sheehan and an editor planted themselves in a room at the Jefferson Hotel in Washington. They spent several weeks there reading the documents and summarizing what they had. Then they were summoned to New York to brief the newspaper's top editors. Meeting at The Times's headquarters on West 43rd Street, Mr. Sheehan found the company's lawyer appearing shaken.

"It was like somebody had thrown a bucket of ice water over the man," Mr. Sheehan remembered. "He was just terrified of what the hell I was saying. He kept saying: 'Don't tell them this. They won't be able to keep the secret. Somebody will talk about it. We may have committed a felony.'"

He and the editor were assigned a room at the Hilton hotel in midtown Manhattan to continue working. Soon there was another editor, three more writers, security guards and file cabinets with combination locks. Eventually there were dozens of people working round the clock in three adjoining rooms. "We mapped the whole thing out," Mr. Sheehan remembered. "And we started cranking away."

He made a practice of calling Mr. Ellsberg every few days — "to try to keep him on the ranch," as he put it in 2015. Mr. Sheehan was not worried about another newspaper breaking the story, he said; he was worried that someone whom Mr. Ellsberg had spoken to would blow the whistle before The Times could publish.

So he made excuses to Mr. Ellsberg for his seeming lack of progress. He said the top editors were still discussing how best to proceed. He even went up to Cambridge, he remembered, as though to take more notes. Mr. Ellsberg railed at him there, Mr. Sheehan said. "I'm taking all the risks," he remembered Mr. Ellsberg saying. "You people aren't taking any risk."

A Signal, and Then a Go

A few weeks before publication, Mr. Sheehan decided to send Mr. Ellsberg a signal. He was not willing to tell him directly that The Times was going ahead because he feared that Mr. Ellsberg's reaction might inadvertently tip the government off. But he wanted some kind of "tacit consent" from Mr. Ellsberg, he remembered.

"It was a matter of conscience," he said.

So he told Mr. Ellsberg that he now needed the documents, not just his notes. Mr. Ellsberg had said that he would hand them over only when he was ready, knowing that The Times would then do as it pleased. This time, when Mr. Sheehan asked, Mr. Ellsberg consented.

Mr. Sheehan chose to believe that the consent meant that Mr. Ellsberg understood that The Times could now publish any day.

"This was an exercise in giving Ellsberg some warning — if he remembered what he'd told me — and a bit of conscience-salving on my part," Mr. Sheehan recalled. "Maybe it's hypocritical, but we were going to go to press, and I wanted to try to give him some kind of warning."

Mr. Ellsberg, it would turn out, had missed the signal.

Meanwhile, he arranged for Mr. Sheehan to pick up a complete copy of the historical study stowed in an Ellsberg family apartment in Manhattan. Mr. Sheehan remembered paying the doorman “the kind of generous tip that leads people to say, ‘I don’t know nuthin’.’ Because I knew sooner or later the F.B.I. would be trying to piece all of this together.”

He took other steps at the last minute to cover his tracks. A copy stored at the Sheehans’ house went into a colleague’s freezer. Pages of other copies bearing Mr. Ellsberg’s initials were pulped in New Jersey or burned in the barbecue set of a diplomat from Brazil, a friend of Mr. Sheehan’s father-in-law.

In the end, the timing of the publication of the Pentagon Papers took Mr. Ellsberg by surprise. When Mr. Sheehan finally returned Mr. Ellsberg’s calls, he reached only Mr. Ellsberg’s wife, who, he said, told him that Mr. Ellsberg was happy with the presentation of the material but, as Mr. Sheehan put it, “unhappy over the monumental duplicity.”

In the interview in 2015, Mr. Sheehan said he had never revealed Mr. Ellsberg’s identity while the project was underway. To his editors he always spoke only of “the sources.” It was another journalist, outside the paper, who blew Mr. Ellsberg’s cover not long after the Pentagon Papers story broke.

Nor did Mr. Sheehan ever speak about how he had obtained the papers. In 2015, he said he had never wanted to contradict Mr. Ellsberg’s account or embarrass him by describing Mr. Ellsberg’s behavior and state of mind at the time.

There was no contact between the two men for six months. Shortly before Christmas 1971, Mr. Sheehan said, they ran into each other in Manhattan. In a brief conversation, he said, he told Mr. Ellsberg what he had done.

“So you stole it, like I did,” he recalled Mr. Ellsberg saying.

“No, Dan, I didn’t steal it,” Mr. Sheehan said he had answered. “And neither did you. Those papers are the property of the people of the United States. They paid for them with their national treasure and the blood of their sons, and they have a right to it.”

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HEADLINE	01/07 Study: 1/3rd of rivers changed color
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/americas-rivers-changed-color-1984-75112511
GIST	<p>America’s rivers are changing color — and people are behind many of the shifts, a new study said.</p> <p>One-third of the tens of thousands of mile-long (two kilometer-long) river segments in the United States have noticeably shifted color in satellite images since 1984. That includes 11,629 miles (18,715 kilometers) that became greener, or went toward the violet end of the color spectrum, according to a study in this week’s journal Geographical Research Letters. Some river segments became more red.</p> <p>Only about 5% of U.S. river mileage is considered blue — a color often equated with pristine waters by the general public. About two-thirds of American rivers are yellow, which signals they have lots of soil in them.</p> <p>But 28% of the rivers are green, which often indicates they are choked with algae. And researchers found 2% of U.S. rivers over the years shifted from dominantly yellow to distinctly green.</p> <p>“If things are becoming more green, that’s a problem,” said study lead author John Gardner, a University of Pittsburgh geology and environmental sciences professor. Although some green tint to rivers can be normal, Gardener said, it often means large algae blooms that cause oxygen loss and can produce toxins.</p>

Return to Top	<p>The chief causes of color changes are farm fertilizer run-off, dams, efforts to fight soil erosion and man-made climate change, which increases water temperature and rain-related run-off, the study authors said.</p> <p>“We change our rivers a lot. A lot of that has to do with human activity,” said study co-author Tamlin Pavelsky, a professor of global hydrology at the University of North Carolina.</p> <p>For example, Pavelsky said, the green at times in the Ohio River indicates a bad algae problem from farm runoff while rivers that are getting less yellow demonstrate the success of regulations to prevent soil erosion.</p> <p>The study looked at more than 230,000 NASA satellite images over 35 years, focusing on rivers and reservoirs. The study found much of the shift to greener rivers happened in the North and West, while the yellowing occurred more in the East and around the Mississippi River. It also found some rivers change colors naturally with the seasons.</p> <p>Outside experts praised the study, saying while hard-to-understand measurements have shown problems with American rivers, this illustrates the situation simply.</p> <p>The study “is super cool and a bit mind-blowing (yet intuitive),” Martin Doyle, head of water programs at Duke University, wrote in an email. “It shows how most every aspect of our planet is being affected by humans, now including the basic color of our water. That’s pretty profound if you think about it.”</p> <p>“It’s also important because it opens up the idea and potential of using river color as early-stage indicator, or warning of environmental change,” wrote Doyle, who wasn’t part of the study.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Australia: 2020 4th hottest year on record
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/australia-swelters-4th-hottest-year-2020-75113490
GIST	<p>CANBERRA, Australia -- Australia has sweltered through its fourth-hottest year on record despite the usually cooling impact in recent months of the La Nina climate pattern, the nation’s weather bureau said on Friday.</p> <p>The wetter-than-average 2020 followed Australia’s hottest and driest year in 2019 that came to a catastrophic conclusion with wildfires fueled by drought that killed at least 33 people, destroyed more than 3,000 homes and razed 19 million hectares (47 million acres).</p> <p>Globally, 2020 is likely to be recognized as the world’s third-hottest on record once climate data for December is calculated, Bureau of Meteorology head of climate operations Andrew Watkins said.</p> <p>La Nina, the cooler flipside of the better known El Nino, was declared in the Pacific Ocean in September. La Nina occurs when equatorial trade winds become stronger, changing ocean surface currents and drawing up cooler deep water.</p> <p>Waikins said the La Nina cycle usually sets in between March and May, but the weather pattern did not impact Australia’s temperatures until October.</p> <p>“You could say that the fourth-warmest year on record is our warmest La Nina year,” Watkins said.</p> <p>“But this year started very hot and dry and ended more like La Nina. So it’s arguable whether you’d say it was really influenced for enough of the year to expect it to be cooler,” he added.</p> <p>The hottest temperature in Australia for 2020 was 48.9 degrees Celsius (120 degrees Fahrenheit) recorded at the height of the wildfire emergency at Penrith in New South Wales state on Jan. 4. It was the hottest temperature ever recorded in the Sydney area.</p>

	<p>Australia's other hottest years were 2013 and 2005.</p> <p>Australia's daily temperature was 1.15 degrees Celsius (2.07 degrees Fahrenheit) above average last year and rainfall was 4% above average despite a parched start to the year.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	01/07 Portland suburb police confront riot
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/portland-suburbs-police-declare-riot-after-protest-following-officer-involved-shooting
GIST	<p>Police in a suburb of Portland, Ore., declared a riot Thursday night after around 100 protesters smashed windows and sprayed graffiti in a downtown business area.</p> <p>The unrest in Tigard, a city of about 48,000 residents, just southwest of Portland, came in response to officers having fatally shot a 26-year-old domestic violence suspect named Jacob Ryan McDuff, according to reports.</p> <p>"Stop Killing People and We Will Stop Rioting," one spray-painted message read, according to KGW-TV of Portland.</p> <p>The Tigard police headquarters was also vandalized.</p> <p>Officers arrested one protester, Zane Saleem Bsoul, 20, charging him with one count of rioting.</p> <p>The crowd dispersed by around 9:30 p.m. PT.</p> <p>Officers had shot McDuff during a confrontation while attempting to arrest him, KGW reported.</p> <p>Arresting officers discovered McDuff had a knife and in the struggle to take him into custody he was shot, the department said.</p> <p>Anti-police protests have continued nightly in the Portland area for nearly a year.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 CBP seizes \$700K counterfeit jewelry
SOURCE	https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/local-media-release/1216-pieces-counterfeit-jewelry-worth-over-700k-seized-cbp-louisville
GIST	<p>LOUISVILLE, Ky—U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers in Louisville intercepted a shipment, arriving from Hong Kong, manifested as a jewelry set containing more than 1,200 pieces.</p> <p>On January 5, CBP officers in Louisville halted the shipment that was bound for Hollywood, Florida. CBP officers inspected the parcel to determine the admissibility of its contents in accordance with CBP regulations.</p> <p>The shipment contained 1,216 pieces of designer jewelry, which were reviewed by an import specialist who determined the items were counterfeit. If these items were real, the total MSRP for these would have been \$707,160.</p>

	<p>“Counterfeiters are focused on making a profit, no matter what the cost may be to consumers,” said Thomas Mahn, Port Director-Louisville. “Counterfeits damage the U.S. economy and promote other types of crimes, while strengthening organized crime and terrorism groups.”</p> <p>Every year, CBP seizes millions of counterfeit goods from countries around the world as part of its mission to protect U.S. businesses and consumers. These goods include fake versions of popular products, such as smartphones and related accessories, electronics, apparel, shoes, cosmetics, and high-end luxury goods, as well as goods posing significant health and safety concerns, such as counterfeit pharmaceuticals, bicycle and motorcycle helmets, medical devices, supplements and other consumables. Sold online and in stores, counterfeit goods hurt the U.S. economy, cost Americans their jobs, threaten consumer health and safety, and fund criminal activity.</p> <p>Visit the National IPR Coordination Center for more information about IPR including counterfeiting and piracy.</p> <p>Nationwide in Fiscal Year 2020, CBP seized 26,503 shipments containing goods that violated intellectual property rights. The total estimated value of the seized goods, had they been genuine, was nearly \$1.3 billion.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 NYC homicides, shootings sharp rise 2020
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-city-homicides-and-shootings-rose-dramatically-in-2020-11610055243?mod=hp_listb_pos3
GIST	<p>Homicides and shootings in New York City rose sharply in 2020, New York Police Department officials said Thursday, as police resources were stretched thin by the Covid-19 pandemic and responses to large-scale protests over the killing of George Floyd.</p> <p>The number of murders in the city rose to 462 last year, up nearly 45% from 319 in 2019, according to the NYPD. The increase accompanied a steep rise in gun violence more intense than any seen in the previous 20 years, according to police statistics.</p> <p>The city recorded 1,531 shootings in 2020, 97% more than the 777 in 2019. Data showed the number of shooting victims in the city more than doubled to 1,868 in 2020 from 923 in 2019. The number of shooting victims exceeds the number of shootings because multiple people may be shot in a single incident.</p> <p>Overall serious crime in the city fell nearly 1% compared with 2019, NYPD data showed, driven by a steep decline in the number of grand larcenies reported to police. Of the seven index crimes tracked by the NYPD, grand larceny is the largest category with the highest number of incidents.</p> <p>In a press briefing published Wednesday, NYPD officials said that the department’s head count was diminished by hundreds of officers getting sick from Covid-19 in the spring. Summertime protests over Mr. Floyd, a Black man killed in Minneapolis police custody, also strained the department’s workforce, the officials said.</p> <p>Commissioner Dermot Shea said in a statement that the NYPD will work to reduce crime in the city in partnership with its residents. “Together, we will ensure the preservation of our collective public safety while also cultivating a culture that upholds the values and dignity of every New Yorker,” Mr. Shea said.</p> <p>Mr. Shea and the NYPD have faced criticism from elected officials, activists and law-enforcement unions for the department’s handling of the rise in shootings and killings that occurred in the city last year.</p> <p>Mr. Shea and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio have cited a number of factors as fueling the rise in shootings and killings in the city, together creating what Mr. de Blasio has described as a “perfect storm” of circumstances behind increased violence.</p>

	<p>Changes in bail laws, slowdowns in court proceedings and reductions in arrests have all been cited by law-enforcement officials, politicians and criminologists as factors fueling the increase in violent crime.</p> <p>NYPD officials have also cited increased gang activity as a factor in about half of the city's shootings and have said the department will target gang leadership in an effort to reduce gun violence in 2021.</p> <p>Former NYPD sergeant Joseph Giacalone said that the rise in shootings and killings in New York City represents a significant deterioration of public safety as experienced by residents, even though the number of serious crimes overall in the city ticked down slightly in 2020.</p> <p>Mr. Giacalone, who is an adjunct professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, said in an interview that gun violence has an outsize impact on perceptions of safety among the citizenry and law enforcement.</p> <p>"Shooting incidents, shooting victims and homicides," Mr. Giacalone said. "Those are the things everyone is worried about."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Portland: mayor assaulted at restaurant
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/jan/7/ted-wheeler-portland-mayor-assaulted-at-restaurant/
GIST	<p>Portland, Oregon, Mayor Ted Wheeler was assaulted at a restaurant Wednesday evening during a confrontation with protesters, police said.</p> <p>According to local news reports, Mr. Wheeler was having dinner with a woman in the outdoor dining area of a northwest Portland restaurant when he was approached by a group of protesters.</p> <p>"I think you need to leave," Mr. Wheeler told one protester, who was recording the incident, according to footage posted on Twitter by a Defund the Police account.</p> <p>"Are you comfortable?" the protester asked in the video. "I think you need to do your job as a f—ing mayor. I think you're a disgrace. I think that everybody in this f—ing city thinks that you're f—ing pathetic."</p> <p>"How old are you?" Mr. Wheeler asked the man. "I think you need to grow up."</p> <p>"You are going to be made to feel like the scum you are," the man yelled.</p> <p>One person punched Mr. Wheeler in the shoulder and then fled the scene, Portland Police told KATU, a local ABC affiliate. The reported contact was not captured in the video posted to Twitter, though Mr. Wheeler can be heard in another video posted by another anti-police account claiming that someone assaulted him, The Oregonian reported.</p> <p>No arrests have yet been made. Police said the case is being investigated.</p> <p>Mayoral spokesman Jim Middaugh said in a statement Thursday that a member of the group "started swatting at the mayor and made physical contact with him."</p> <p>"The mayor was not injured," Mr. Middaugh said. "Restaurant staff persuaded the group to leave. Police arrived shortly after and the group dispersed. The mayor is committed to supporting local businesses and wants others to do the same. Given the tenor of political discourse nationally and locally, it's not unusual for people to confront the Mayor and other elected officials in public. It's part of the job. The Mayor will continue to support local restaurants and businesses as often as he can. He urges others to do the same."</p>

	The confrontation came hours after pro-President Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol in Washington in clashes that led to one shooting death, three medical emergency deaths and more than 50 arrests.
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HEADLINE	01/08 Mexico: gunmen storm wake; kill 9
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/08/world/americas/mexico-killings-guanajuato.html?action=click&module=Latest&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY — At least nine people were killed in central Mexico as gunmen opened fire at a wake late Thursday, the local authorities reported, with images on social media showing bloody bodies strewn near a coffin and people who had collapsed on the street.</p> <p>The shooting took place outside a private home in the city of Celaya in Guanajuato State, according to the local authorities, who said one wounded person had been taken to a hospital. Some local media outlets reported that the death toll could be as high as 13.</p> <p>The attack occurred at about 9 p.m. in the Arboledas de San Rafael neighborhood. Security forces were searching for those responsible, according to the Secretariat of Citizen Security, a local agency in Celaya.</p> <p>Rapid gunfire could be heard in videos on social media that appeared to have been recorded at the scene.</p> <p>The attack is the latest to roil Guanajuato, once a relatively peaceful region, which is at the center of a turf war between rival criminal groups.</p> <p>The state, home to tourist destinations like San Miguel de Allende, has lately become one of Mexico's deadliest. In July, 26 people were killed after armed men stormed into a drug rehabilitation facility in the city of Irapuato, the latest in a series of violent attacks that have taken place across much of the country.</p> <p>A center for car manufacturing northwest of Mexico City, Guanajuato averaged at least nine homicides a day in 2020, one of the highest murder rates in the country.</p> <p>The bloodshed in Guanajuato is largely the result of a territorial dispute between the Santa Rosa de Lima cartel and the larger and more powerful Jalisco New Generation cartel, which has expanded operations into Guanajuato. That raging conflict has led to soaring violence and several mass killings.</p> <p>"The situation Guanajuato is facing is very serious," Mexico's president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, said at a news conference after the massacre in July. "There is fighting between gangs, and in the majority of cases it's aggression between them."</p> <p>Despite a promise to deliver peace with "hugs not bullets," Mr. López Obrador has been unable to make a meaningful dent in Mexico's surging violence. More than 31,000 people were killed between January and November of last year, according to official figures.</p> <p>In December, a former governor of the state of Jalisco, Aristóteles Sandoval, was gunned down while vacationing in the resort city of Puerto Vallarta, in one of the most high-profile political assassinations in Mexico's recent history. Security experts said the Jalisco New Generation cartel was the most likely culprit.</p> <p>Mr. Sandoval's killing came just months after a brazen attempt to assassinate Mexico's police chief, which was also tied to the Jalisco cartel.</p>

HEADLINE	01/08 Boston marathon bomber sues govt.
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/boston-marathon-bomber-dzhokhar-tsarnaev-sues-prison-treatment/
GIST	<p>Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev has sued the federal government for \$250,000 over his treatment at the Colorado prison where he is serving a life sentence. Tsarnaev, 26, calls his treatment in the handwritten suit filed Monday "unlawful, unreasonable and discriminatory."</p> <p>He cites the confiscation of a white baseball cap and bandana that he bought at the prison commissary and a limit of three showers per week, the Boston Herald reported. His treatment at the supermax Federal Correctional Complex Florence is contributing to his "mental and physical decline," he says in the lawsuit.</p> <p>The lawsuit has been assigned to a judge, according to court records. The judge said Tuesday the filing is deficient because it does not include a "certified copy of prisoner's trust fund statement" and a \$402 filing fee.</p> <p>An email seeking comment was left Thursday with the federal Bureau of Prisons.</p> <p>Tsarnaev alleges his cap and bandana were confiscated by prison guards "because, by wearing it, I was 'disrespecting' the FBI and the victims" of the April 15, 2013, bombing.</p> <p>During the investigation, Tsarnaev was referred to by law enforcement as "White Hat" when he was seen on surveillance video leaving the scene of the bombings.</p> <p>Three people died and more than 260 people were injured at the scene when two pressure cooker bombs were set off near the marathon's finish line.</p> <p>Tsarnaev's older brother, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, was killed in a shootout with police three days later.</p> <p>Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was convicted and sentenced to death, but the death sentence was overturned last July by a federal appeals court that said the judge who oversaw the case did not adequately screen jurors for potential biases. That decision has been appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.</p> <p>Tsarnaev is serving his sentence at the maximum-security "Supermax" facility in a remote mountainous region south of Denver. It houses prisoners including "Unabomber" Ted Kaczynski, Oklahoma City bombing conspirator Terry Nichols and notorious drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman.</p> <p>ADX Florence, opened in 1994, houses more than 400 of the federal Bureau of Prison's "most violent, disruptive and escape-prone inmates," according to the BOP.</p> <p>Travis Dusenbury told the Marshall Project he was imprisoned at ADX Florence for 10 years after assaulting a correctional officer at a federal prison in Florida in 2005. He described being in a concrete cell for 23 or 24 hours a day, and being allowed outside in a fortified recreation cage for one to two hours a day. In the most restrictive housing unit, he said, his only contact with other inmates came from "finger-handshakes" through fencing in the recreation cages and a makeshift communication channel with neighbors using pipes and toilet paper rolls.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/07 Feds charge rioter for 11 Molotov cocktails
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/mark-jefferson-leffingwell-christopher-michael-alberts-among-first-charged-for-capitol-chaos-feds-say?ref=home

So much for a “peaceful” protest.

Molotov cocktails. Rifles and pistols. Pipe bombs. Body armor and zip-tie handcuffs.

The MAGA mob that rolled into Washington, D.C., and invaded the U.S. Capitol showed up for a “protest” with the implements of battle—creating what one federal prosecutor called “a very dangerous situation.”

They were not stopped from sacking the home of Congress on Wednesday, but now federal authorities are filing the first charges against them for the deadly insurrection.

“We will bring the most maximum charges we can,” Michael Sherwin, acting U.S. attorney for D.C., said at a press conference on Thursday. “This is just the beginning.”

Sherwin said prosecutors are filing federal charges in 15 criminal cases related to Wednesday’s violence. They include the man arrested with his “military semi-automatic rifle” and 11 Molotov cocktails who was “ready to go,” another rioter wielding a pistol, and a third protester who repeatedly punched a police officer.

When asked whether he was planning to investigate the White House, Sherwin insisted that all options are still on the table and that his probe of the riots is ongoing. The top prosecutor added his office is also looking to bring charges against people who may have organized the riot.

“We’re trying to deal with the closest alligators to the boat right now,” Sherwin said. “Those are the people who obviously breached the Capitol, created violence and mayhem there and then exited. But yes, we are looking at all actors here, not only the people that went into the building.”

Sherwin said he would consider sedition and insurrection charges, but his office would begin with the “easiest provable” crimes. He didn’t exclude the possibility of legal action against President Donald Trump, his lawyer Rudy Giuliani, or any other speakers who riled the crowd ahead of the riot.

The Daily Beast obtained an affidavit from an officer in the Capitol Police—the force charged with defending the seat of American legislative affairs—which describes how one Mark Jefferson Leffingwell was among the hundreds of right-wing rioters who forced their way into the complex while lawmakers were attempting to certify President-elect Joe Biden’s November victory.

The officer describes how Leffingwell punched him when he attempted to stop him from joining the mob that eventually reached the Senate chamber.

“When he was deterred from advancing further into the building, Leffingwell punched me repeatedly with a closed fist,” the officer wrote in the deposition. “I was struck in the helmet that I was wearing and in the chest.”

The cop describes how he and his colleagues subdued Leffingwell after a struggle. Once in custody, the officer states that Leffingwell apologized for attacking him.

Efforts to reach Leffingwell and his family were not immediately successful. He faces charges of assaulting a federal law enforcement officer, as well as several counts of trespassing into a restricted building and committing violence inside.

In a separate complaint, a D.C. Metropolitan Police officer detailed his encounter with Christopher Michael Alberts of Maryland. While enforcing Mayor Muriel Bowser’s curfew and corralling demonstrators off the Capitol grounds, the cop reported that the bulletproof-vested Alberts attempted to linger behind.

When he accosted the 33-year-old, the officer said he realized Alberts had a pistol—and upon searching him discovered clips of ammunition, a knife, gas mask, first-aid kit, and a military ready-to-eat meal. Alberts faces federal charges of carrying an unlicensed firearm and ammo on Capitol grounds, and violation of the curfew. Attempts to contact Alberts were not successful.

[While right-wing media on Wednesday afternoon repeatedly characterized the violent siege of the Capitol as “peaceful”](#)—these charges, as well as photos from the day, show it was anything but.

A number of the rioters carried weapons and restraints in an ominous sign of their intentions. Some are visible in photos and videos carrying flex cuffs and zip ties, often used as improvised handcuffs.

One man, dressed all in black with a “Black Rifle Coffee” hat and handgun-shaped object at his hip, was seen walking through seats in the Senate with a bundle of disposable flex cuffs in hand while another man, dressed in body armor and a Navy SEAL-style MICH helmet, was on the floor of the Senate with cuffs in hand. Shortly before the siege, another man with “We Kill Commies” emblazoned on his helmet is visible outside the Capitol with a bundle of zip ties strapped to his body armor.

Others turned to irritants, handguns, and explosives.

“The violent attack on the U.S. Capitol was unlike any I have ever experienced in my 30 years in law enforcement here in Washington, D.C.,” Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund said in a [statement](#).

“[Thousands of] individuals actively attacked [officers] with metal pipes, discharged chemical irritants, and took up other weapons against our officers. They were determined to enter into the Capitol Building by causing great damage.”

Metropolitan Police Chief Robert Contee said on Thursday they had made 68 arrests, including several for carrying pistols without licenses, and recovered two pipe bombs placed at the Democratic and Republican National Committee headquarters.

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HEADLINE	01/07 FBI: reward for D.C. pipe bombs suspect
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/live-blog/2021-01-06-congress-electoral-vote-count-n1253179/ncrd1253424#liveBlogHeader
GIST	<p>The FBI on Thursday announced it is offering a \$50,000 reward to find the person responsible for two pipe bombs at the Democratic and Republican national committee headquarters on Wednesday when there were riots by a pro-Trump mob at the U.S. Capitol.</p> <p>The bombs, which did not explode, were discovered at the two headquarters after reports received around 1 p.m. Wednesday. United States Capitol Police said that its bomb squad "determined that both devices were, in fact, hazardous and could cause great harm to public safety." They were disabled and turned over to the FBI.</p> <p>Law enforcement is now trying to identify the Capitol rioters, and the FBI Washington Field Office said earlier Thursday it had received more than 4,000 tips.</p> <p>The Democratic National Committee and Republican National Committee headquarters are a short distance from the Capitol grounds.</p>
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